

THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST



2017

BIBLE STUDY AND HOME CELL GUIDE

*Compiled by
National Discipleship & Leadership Development Committee*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Foreword	4
2. Introduction and Acknowledgment	7
3. Bible Study Week by Week Guide	13
4. Bible Study Scripts	15
5. Home Cell Week by Week Guide	108
6. Home Cell Scripts	110
7. Extra Script	182
8. Read through the Bible in a Year	199
9. Feedback Sheet	202

FOREWORD

The 5-year theme of the Church of Pentecost, which covers the period 2013-2018 is *Impacting Generations*. Based on this the theme for 2017 is *I Am an Example of Christ in My Generation*. (1 Cor 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 11:1)

It reflects the urgent need to call Christians to a life of personal holiness with our Lord Jesus Christ as our perfect example. Such a call is necessary to keep the Church on her toes, ever committed to follow the shining examples of Christ as recorded in the Gospels. He has made us the light of the world and salt of the earth. Accordingly, we should serve as His agents in transforming a dark and decaying world.

The commitment of the Executive Council of the Church to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in dealing with the theme shows our readiness as a Church to continue to play our prophetic role in society. This commitment reflects our readiness to obey the Great Commission Jesus extends to us to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28: 18-20). Further, it reinforces our share in Jesus' passion to see the reign of godliness and righteousness in society. Moreover, we see the theme as reminder to us as a Church to assess the quality of our stewardship over the years as examined in the light of Jesus' standard of godliness and righteousness.

As a church we count ourselves privileged by God in that many of our officers and members are placed in positions of influence in various segments of society. Some are royals, serving as chiefs and queens while others are politicians; many are in the field of medicine while several others are in academia. These, together with those in business, banking, music, and mass communication industries, among others, are expected to serve as credible agents of Christ and the Church wherever He places them. Their collective effort to keep faith with their calling, however, should be complemented by the overall effort of other Christians identified with other denominations and para-church organizations in the country. This necessity is long overdue considering the massive corruption that infests almost all strata of society. If we love Jesus as we should, we will be committed to doing His pleasure – the pursuit of godliness and righteousness wherever we find ourselves.

It is in this light that the National Discipleship and Leadership Development Committee is highly commended for producing this study manual for our discipleship. This study material has been prepared in line with the year's theme. The manual will be used for our Bible Study and Home Cell meetings to further equip us for every good work.

As we go through the study material this year, we expect certain positive developments to take place. Firstly, that we shall find time individually to assess the degree of our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, we shall have the opportunity to reflect on how we have fared over the years as stewards over God's resources. Then, we can rededicate ourselves to the sterling virtues of Christ as He would have His true disciples do. Above all we can resolve to walk as the light of the world and live as the salt of the earth. It is only then that others may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

I therefore recommend these lessons to you and request that you make a diligent commitment to study them and also apply lessons learnt to every aspect of your life. I trust that your resolve to be consistent in doing so will bring you returns of a transformed life that truly reflects the character and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sure way to impact all the people around you. God bless you.

*Opoku Onyinah (Apostle Prof.)
Chairman, The Church of Pentecost.*

INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the year 2017, the theme for the Church of Pentecost as provided by the Lord through the Chairman and the Executive Council is *I Am An Example of Christ in My Generation*. (1 Cor 4:15-17; 1 Cor. 11:1)

This flows from the 5-year vision of *Impacting Generations*. This year, the aim of the current leadership of the church is to challenge members to reflect the life of Christ wherever we find ourselves such that we would really be 'Christ-ians' because of the life of Christ we portray. Indeed, among the persons in scripture, the Lord Jesus stands out in character, attitude, behaviour and conduct. From birth to death, He demonstrated by His life, character and walk that He is the yardstick for godliness.

In Luke 9:35, when God said, This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Keep listening to him (ISV), He set the Lord Jesus above all other Prophets and request our submission to Him only. This year, we would be expected to model among other virtues the humility, diligence, obedience, generosity and holiness of Jesus Christ. Wherever we shall be placed, we shall be **An Example of Christ** no matter the cost and context (home, work, church, community etc.)

The Bible Study and Home Cell Ministry, which is the church's key structure for discipleship and pastoral care, will once again serve as a means of equipping

and empowering members to be examples of Christ in this generation. The prepared study outlines are basically based on the theme and aimed at enhancing the systematic study of the Word of God in small relational and permanent groups.

Bible Study outlines have been provided for study on every Sunday, except the Lord's Supper Sunday. An additional feature for this year's Bible Study is that, specific outlines have been provided for **Special Days** (e.g. We Care Day, McKeown Missions Week, PEMEM Week). Accordingly, when the Special Day is to be celebrated in an Area/District/Local, the specific study should be used to make the study relevant to the day.

For the Home Cell meetings, the **first week** is designated *Family Day* (i.e. every Lord's Supper Day). On this day, families (husband, wife, children and dependents) are expected to meet in their various homes to discuss issues pertaining to their growth and also to pray together. On the Family Day, the head of the family or his representative will provide direction for the day's activities. Where a person is living alone, they can possibly join another family for the family day, as a way of being nurtured in a family set-up.

In some of the weeks, study outlines have been provided for study by the members in the Cell. In other weeks, the designation for that week will determine what would be done on that day. For weeks designated *Discuss Today's Sermon/Bible Study*, Cell

members are expected to reflect on and discuss the sermon and/or Bible study heard at Church in the morning. Members are to consider how to implement the lessons learnt practically and then pray.

For weeks designated *Pastoral Care Groupings/ Follow-up and Visitation*, it is expected that members would meet in their Pastoral Care Groups, share fellowship and pray for one another. The Cell can also use the day for follow up and visitation to backsliding members or visit one another.

For weeks designated **District/Local/Cell Input Day**, the District Minister through the Presiding Elders or Cell leaders provide the direction for study. The day could be used for prayer, fellowship, get together, evangelism, etc. There could also be a discussion on issues that are pressing within the District/Local/Cell Group (or locality).

There are **Extra Scripts** that have been provided for use at the Bible Study or Cell level at the direction of the District Minister and Presiding Elder.

Included in this year's manual is a *Read Through the Bible in a Year Guide*. This guide would enable those who can read to systematically read through the entire Bible. By this, we encourage all members who can read to take up the challenge to read the whole in the year 2017.

It is expected that the District Minister (District Cell Coordinator) will hold a weekly or biweekly Preparatory Classes with the Bible Study and Cell Leaders. The aim of the Preparatory Class is to study the material with them, develop their skills in handling the Small Groups and mentor them. It would enable the District Minister to untie hard knots in the study and empower the Bible Study and Cell Leaders to go and teach effectively in the Bible Study classes and Cell meetings.

The focus of the Bible study outlines is the practical application of the text to daily life and the Minister must help the leaders to achieve that. The Bible Study and Cell Leaders also have the responsibility to study diligently on their own ahead of the class so they can impact the class during the studies.

The National Discipleship and Leadership Development Committee (NDLDC) expresses gratitude to the Almighty God for the wisdom, grace, strength and protection granted to all the persons who played a role in the production of this manual. As a Committee, we duly recognize the wisdom and direction of the Chairman, Apostle Prof. Opoku Onyinah, and his Executive Council members towards the Discipleship Enterprise of the Church. We appreciate the keen interest and passion of the General Secretary, Apostle Alexander Nana Yaw Kumi-Larbi towards this work.

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For providing direction for the writing and editing of the study scripts and coordinating the translation and production of the 2017 Study Outlines, the members of the NDLDC deserve commendation. Together,

they have been meticulous in the production of this manual. They are:

Aps. John Appiah Aidoo	Deputy Coordinator
Aps. Samuel Kodzo Gakpetor	Secretary
Aps. Matthew Larbi Wetley	Member
Aps. Dr. Ben Ali	Member
Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Anim	Member
Ps. Franklin Agbovi Hushie	Member
Ps. Henry Sowah Ako-Nai	Member
Ps. Eric Kweku Ansah	Organizer, LLTS

We trust that this humble contribution of the NDLDLDC would be used by the Holy Spirit to challenge all members to be Examples of Christ in our Generation.

Aps. Dr. Stephen Kofi Baidoo
National Coordinator, NDLDLDC

2017 WEEK BY WEEK TABULAR BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

WEEK	DATE	ACTIVITY	BIBLE STUDY TOPICS	PAGE
JANUARY				
1	1 st		Lord's Supper Day	15
2	8 th		There Is Hope For The Year 2017	16
3	15 th		Let Your Light Shine	19
4	22 nd	WE CARE DAY	The Christian's Response To The Needy	21
5	29 th		Touching The Lives Of Others	24
FEBRUARY				
6	5 th		Lord's Supper Day	26
7	12 th		Jesus, My Perfect Example	27
8	19 th		Jesus Christ, Tempted Yet Without Sin	29
9	26 th		Imitating Jesus Christ	31
MARCH				
10	5 th		Lord's Supper Day	33
11	12 th	MCKEOWN MISSIONS WEEK	Generosity Towards God's Work	34
12	19 th		The Christian's Devotional Life	36
13	26 th		Developing Intimacy With God Through Prayer	38
APRIL				
14	2 nd		Lord's Supper Day	40
15	9 th		God's Love For The World	41
16	16 th	EASTER SUNDAY	Easter	43
17	23 rd	OFFICERS' APPRECIATION DAY	Honouring The Officers Of The Church	44
18	30 th		Jesus The True Model Of Diligence	47
MAY				
19	7 th		Lord's Supper Day	49
20	14 th	PUC DAY	Godly Wisdom For Future Leaders	50
21	21 st	PEMEM WEEK	Fathers, Spiritual Teachers of The Families	52
22	28 th		The Power Of Personal Evangelism	54
JUNE				
23	4 th		Lord's Supper Day	56
24	11 th		Reaching The Elite With The Gospel	57
25	18 th		Forgiving Those Who Offend Us	59
26	25 th		Humility, An Attitude Of Christ	61

JULY				
27	2nd		Lord's Supper Day	63
28	9th		The Wedding At Eden	64
29	16th	WOMEN'S WEEK	Deborah, A Woman Of Faith	66
30	23rd		Focusing On Your Marriage	68
31	30th		Honouring The Marriage Vows	70
AUGUST				
32	6th		Lord's Supper Day	72
33	13th		Caring For The Bereaved	73
34	20th		Christianity And Culture	75
35	27th		Breaking Through Cultural and Religious Barriers	77
SEPTEMBER				
36	3rd		Lord's Supper Day	79
37	10th		Encouraging Obedience In Children	80
38	17th	CHILDREN'S WEEK	Jesus, Still Friend Of Children	82
39	24th		Raising Godly Children In Our Generation	84
OCTOBER				
40	1st		Lord's Supper Day	86
41	8th		Relating With In-Laws (Moses & Jethro)	87
42	15th		Relating With In-Laws (Ruth & Naomi)	89
43	22nd	PENSIONS DAY	Honouring Our Retired Ministers & Widows	91
44	29th		Love, The New Commandment	93
NOVEMBER				
45	6th		Lord's Supper Day	95
46	13th		District/Local Input	96
47	20th		Attributes Of True Love	97
48	27th		Love In Action	99
DECEMBER				
49	5th		Lord's Supper Day	101
50	12th		The Divinity Of Jesus Christ	102
51	19th		Peace On Earth	104
52	26th	CHRISTMAS CONVENTIONS	Christmas Convention	106

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

WEEK 2

THERE IS HOPE FOR THE YEAR 2017

Main Text: Nehemiah 2:1-18

Memory Verse: *Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace."* - Nehemiah 2:17

Introduction

Beginnings present an exciting periods of hope and expectations. As we begin the year, many of us have already documented their expectations while others are yet to do so. Whatever be the case, the beginning of the year presents a very interesting period in the journey of life. Many nations are also going through the inaugurations of new governments. No matter the party in office, we as Christians must demonstrate our commitment and love towards our nations. To love one's nation is to endeavour to do things that would enhance its well-being. This is different from the unproductive approach of being critical of leaders and nothing more. In our study today, Nehemiah was a man of action. He sat down and wept and mourned before God for some days when he heard about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Then he sought the face of God in repentance, fasting, and prayer: he confessed the sins of his people and his own. Following this, God planted a vision in his heart to mobilize his people for national reconstruction.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did the king get to know that Nehemiah was mourning? Verses 1-2
2. What was Nehemiah's reply when the king asked him what he wanted? Verse 5
3. What did Nehemiah do after inspecting the destruction in Jerusalem? Verse 17
4. Why do you think Nehemiah had confidence that he would succeed?
5. What are you doing to fix a problem:
 - at home
 - the workplace
 - in the church
 - in the community?

Conclusion

Nehemiah went to Jerusalem with the assurance that the broken walls would rise again, the burned gates replaced, the temple rebuilt, the altar would be reconstructed, and the economy improved. He had high hopes that national security and the dignity of the people would be restored.

As a faithful steward, Nehemiah was ready to move with God for a mighty revival since he had all the abilities needed to carry out the vision. God found him trustworthy enough to commit resources to his care (Verses 6-8). The leadership style of Nehemiah affirms the fact that leaders who share their God-given vision with others at the right time are more likely to enjoy their support than those who do it alone. When nations tend to despair as a result of leadership failure, it is necessary to have visionary leaders who will rise to the occasion and assure the people that, "Come what may, there is hope for the future."

WEEK 3

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Main Text: Matthew 5:13-16

Memory Verse: *You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden* - Matthew 5:14

Introduction

The theme of the Church of Pentecost this year is I am an Example of Christ in My Generation. In our main text, Jesus admonishes us to be agents of His goodness so the wickedness in the world would not triumph. The scripture says we are the light of the world, and as a city on a hill cannot be hidden, so must our Christian virtues be clear to all. Jesus identifies Himself as the light of the world and He expects us to reflect His character by the way we live. This is what He means when He says we should let our light so shine before men. If we put a lamp on a stand to shine, it dispels darkness. Accordingly, one cannot live a sinful life and shine for others to see. In our study today, we will learn how we can shine as lights.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who are the light of the world? Verse 14
2. What does it mean to be light of the world?

3. Why should we let our lives shine before men?
4. To a large extent, our lives as Christians are not imparting our nation. Discuss.
5. In what ways can our lights as Christians shine before men?

Conclusion

One goal of the kingdom of God is righteousness. God demands righteousness because He is righteous. One cannot enter the kingdom of God and ignore righteous living. The Sermon on the Mount recommends values and behaviours for members of the Kingdom and encourages us to let our light shine before men. It is sad, however, that though Ghana is usually seen as a Christian nation the impact of Christians in the nation has not been felt as expected. We need to show a life of integrity at home, in business, in politics, in our offices and wherever we find ourselves as Christians. It is possible for us to be good examples of Jesus. This can be done by practising what He has taught us.

WEEK 4
WE CARE DAY
THE CHRISTIAN'S
RESPONSIBILITY TO THE NEEDY

Main Text: Acts 4:32-37

Memory Verse: *...and if you spend yourself in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noonday* - Isaiah 58:10

Introduction

Helping those in need is one of the major themes of the Bible; Jesus demonstrated this in His ministry. In the Old Testament, the LORD commanded the Israelites to harvest their fields in a manner that would always leave portions of their produce for the poor and needy to pick (Lev 19:9-10). Also, Jesus through various teachings stressed the need to be generous to the poor. In addition, the early Christians exemplified these virtues in their daily lives by meeting the needs of one another through sacrificial giving and sharing (Acts 4:32-37). Can the same be said of our generation? Our discussion today will help us examine our responsibilities to the needy and how we can follow the example of Christ in fulfilling this mandate.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the relationship among the believers? Verse 32
2. How do you understand the statement, 'there were no needy persons among them'? Verses 34-35
3. How did Jesus demonstrate generosity to those in need? Luke 9:11,16-17
4. How can we identify and meet the physical, spiritual, social and other needs of people in our families, the church and society?
5. How can we differentiate genuine needs from laziness, greed and a person's desire to exploit the generosity and kind-heartedness of fellow believers? 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

Conclusion

Jesus was sensitive to the needs of His listeners, disciples and the sick and ensured that their needs were met. In the same way, the relationship that existed among the believers was that of cordiality, sensitivity, and oneness. As a result, none was needy among them. Their sensitivity, fellow-feeling and the love of God drove them to go the extra mile in meeting the needs of one another. We must thus, be encouraged by the good examples of our Lord Jesus Christ and the early church to identify the various areas of need of our

friends, families and strangers and endeavour to meet them. Meeting the needs of others brings fulfilment and meaning to our lives in a way that accumulation of wealth and self-seeking pursuits cannot match. However, believers must be careful not to exploit kind-hearted family members and fellow believers or use Christian generosity as basis to live idle lives. These do not glorify God.

WEEK 5

TOUCHING THE LIVES OF OTHERS

Main Text: Matthew 13:33

Memory Verse: *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven - Matthew 5:16*

Introduction

In our previous lesson, we learnt how we can touch the lives of others through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, This study is on the parable of the yeast. In this parable, we have been compared to a little yeast that causes the whole dough to rise. Without yeast our loaves will be very flat. In our desire to be like Jesus, we must also strive to imitate Him in all our deeds. We must endeavour to affect people's lives positively.

Questions For Discussion

1. How useful is yeast in baking? Verse 33
2. How can you liken the effect of yeast to the Kingdom of God?
3. Like yeast, how can we impact the lives of other in our churches and communities?

4. What happens to dough without yeast? How is this comparable to a Christian without godly influence?

Conclusion

From the discussions so far, we understand that as followers of Christ, it is our responsibility to influence the lives of others in positive ways. When we fail to do that, many people who otherwise would have come to Christ will not come but find solutions to their problems outside the word of God. Our character and attitudes as Christians in the church, in our communities and at our work places should positively influence others around us just as yeast permeates dough and causes it to rise.

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WEEK 7

JESUS, MY PERFECT EXAMPLE

Main Text: Matthew 3:11-17

Memory Verse: *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" - John 14:6*

Introduction

Miriam Webster's Dictionary defines the word example as "a person or way of behaving that is seen as a model that should be followed". It means that an example becomes the standard to measure a behaviour or action. All around us, there are many examples which shape, transform and inform our lives. Among the characters in scripture, we see that the Lord Jesus stands out in character, attitude, behaviour and conduct. The scriptures urge us to imitate Christ who alone is the way that leads us to God. For example, the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). We are also told in Philippians 2:5 to follow the example of Christ in humility. Christ Himself told His disciples to imitate His example in service (John 13:13). These and other examples make it clear that in all things Christ is the perfect example to follow.

Questions For Discussion

1. How different is Jesus' baptism from that of John? Verses 11-12
2. What makes Jesus different from others? John 14:6
3. What kind of approval did Jesus have at His baptism? Verse 17
4. Pick out the divine and human elements of the Lord Jesus in the passage.
5. In what ways can we see the perfect example of Christ in the passage?

Conclusion

Everything points to the fact that Jesus Christ is the perfect example. From His birth to His death, He proved by His life, character and ministry that He is the benchmark for measuring human and godly standards. Jesus' conduct was exceptional, His character impeccable and His calling divine. No wonder, He emphatically declared "I am the way, the truth and the life". His uniqueness was unparalleled and this was affirmed all the more when at His baptism, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. Then a voice said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased". The totality of the person of Jesus makes Him the perfect example we can emulate.

WEEK 8

**JESUS CHRIST, TEMPTED
YET WITHOUT SIN**

Main Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Memory Verse: *...but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin* - Hebrews 4:15 (b)

Introduction

The New Testament provides enough evidence of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Believing that Jesus was human is one of the foundational beliefs of our Christian faith (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). Like all humans, Jesus was born (Luk 2:7), He grew (Luk 2:40, 52), became tired (John 4:6), got thirsty (John 19:28) and hungry (Matt 4:2). He became physically weak (Matt 4:11; Luk 23:26). In the passage for our study, we will examine the humanity of Jesus Christ from the perspective of His temptations and how He handled them. This gives us a perfect example that even Jesus in His humanity faced all sorts of temptations and yet was without sin.

Questions For Discussion

1. What shows that Jesus Christ was human?
Verses 2-3

2. Identify the kinds of temptations that came His way. Verses 3, 5-6, 8-9
3. How did Jesus Christ deal with the temptations He faced? Verses 4, 7, 10
4. Discuss the various temptations we face as Christians in contemporary times.
5. How does the word of God help us in overcoming temptations?

Conclusion

The temptations of Jesus showed the depth of His human nature. Even though He was the Word made flesh, He had to depend on the strength of the Word to overcome His temptations. The devil's intention was to lead Jesus to disobey God. In contemporary times, we are saddled with temptations on morality, money, fame, and pride among others. It is our continuous dependence on God's word that would enable us to overcome. When the devil could not have his way, he left Christ and so shall it be for us if we stand on the word of God to resist him (James 4:7).

WEEK 9

IMITATING JESUS CHRIST

Main Text: Matthew 20:20-28

Memory Verse: *Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ* - 1 Corinthians 11:1

Introduction

It is common knowledge that we become what we pay attention to in life. Thus, what we see around and listen to the most, model and shape our outlooks on life. Generally, how people dress, eat or even communicate are sometimes informed by the examples they might have observed from others. So far, we have established that the perfect example for life and character building is Jesus Christ. In the passage for our study, we will discuss the example of Jesus as far as servitude is concerned and how the lessons can help us to serve and to give our lives as ransom for many.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the mother of Zebedee's sons request to Jesus? Verses 20-21
2. What was Jesus' response to this request? Verses 22-23

3. How did the other disciples react to this request, and why? Verse 24
4. What did Jesus tell His disciples when He called them together? Verses 25-28
5. In what ways can we follow the example of Christ in humility and service?

Conclusion

Like most mothers, Zebedee's wife wanted Jesus to promote her sons. The implication of her request was disturbing and Jesus had to let her appreciate it accordingly. The disciples of Jesus were obviously unhappy with how the situation was going. Jesus therefore, had to come in and help them to comprehend the fact that the greatest is the one who learns to serve. In other words, great people are those who do not allow their positions to affect their service to others negatively. Jesus Christ demonstrated this much more with His death on the cross, the finality and consummation of all service

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WEEK 11

MCKEOWN MISSIONS WEEK

GENEROSITY TOWARDS GOD'S WORK

Main Text: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Memory Verse: *And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us* - 2 Corinthians 8:5

Introduction

Sustaining the work of Missions involves praying, sending and giving. Thus, to secure the progress of the work of missions in the church, we must excel in sending missionaries, giving to Missions and praying for missionaries. For this reasons, structures exist in the Church of Pentecost for these three areas of support mentioned. However, these structures require our immense support to function and run effectively. In today's study, we shall examine how the churches in Macedonia gave themselves and their substance in support of the work of Missions.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did the Macedonian churches demonstrate the grace that God gave to them? Verses 1-2
2. How did the churches in Macedonia give? Verses 3-4

3. What enabled them to give beyond their ability?
Verse 5
4. What structures exist in the Church of Pentecost for financial support and prayer for Missions?
5. How can we be generous with our resources like time, money and talents among others in support of Missions?

Conclusion

The manner in which we use our financial resources, time and talents tells a lot about our relationship with God. The Macedonian churches were not endowed with so much physical wealth but their relationship with God resulted in their rich generosity towards His work. Structures exist in the Church of Pentecost for the support of Missions. While the sending of missionaries is the sole prerogative of the Executive Council, the areas of prayer and financial support for Missions depend very much on us. In the area of prayer, the church has designed a chart that details the prayer requests of the various Mission Nations. In addition, Wednesday of every communion week is set aside for prayer support for missionaries. In the area of financial support, Missions Offering is given every Communion Sunday to support the work of Missions. Also, the annual McKeown Missions' Week celebration helps to raise funds to support the work of Missions. Like the Macedonian churches, we must continue to give our resources generously in support of the work of Missions.

WEEK 12

THE CHRISTIAN'S DEVOTIONAL LIFE

Main Text: Mark 1:35–38

Memory Verse: *Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed* - Mark 1:35

Introduction

The practice of daily personal devotions is one of the most important spiritual disciplines a Christian must cultivate. Daily devotions or quiet time is the discipline of seeking the Lord daily through His word (Bible Reading, Meditation, and Memorization of Scriptures) and prayer. During personal devotions, God speaks to us, prunes, refreshes, renews, strengthens and clothes us with virtue that enables us to serve in His kingdom. Jesus Christ, our perfect model, often withdrew to solitary places to commune with God.

Questions For Discussion

1. What did Jesus do in the morning as recorded in Mark 1:35?
2. Why did Jesus leave the house for a solitary place? Verse 35
3. Why were the disciples looking for Jesus? Verses 35-37

4. 'Everyone is looking for you.' How can this statement be a hindrance to consistent personal devotions as a Christian? Verse 37
5. How would you emulate the example of Christ in dealing with hindrances to consistent and effective personal devotions?

Conclusion

Early in the morning, Jesus rose up, left His comfort zone, and located a place with minimal distractions for prayer and meditation. Though it is not mentioned that Jesus read scripture in His devotions, it could be inferred that He meditated on the word of God. Aware of the pressures of daily life, Jesus devised a strategy that dealt with the expected hindrances to His personal devotional time with God. Rising up early meant that He could observe His devotions and still have ample time for His daily assignments. Also, by leaving the house for a solitary place, He was sure to avoid distractions from family, friends and help seekers. Jesus' example shows that we cannot stride by chance into a life of consistent and effective personal devotions with God. Following His example in this regard requires intentional planning, sacrifice and discipline.

WEEK 13

**DEVELOPING INTIMACY
WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYER**

Main Text: Luke 5:3, 15-16

Memory Verse: *Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed - Luke 5:15-16*

Introduction

Jesus' ministry on earth was marked with a life of consistent intimate fellowship with God. Prayer preceded every stage of His ministry – daily activities and major assignments. Jesus ensured that the demands of the multitude and His itinerant ministry did not drown His priority for constant communion with God through prayer. For Jesus, prayer was a lifestyle and not a need-based activity. Thus, His fellowship with God was regular, predictable, continuous and ceaseless. The Father desires intimate fellowship with His children. Thus, like Jesus, we must seek constant fellowship with Him through prayer and meditation.

Questions For Discussion

1. What did the crowd seek from Jesus? Verse 15

2. What did Jesus do in the midst of the pressure from the multitude? Verse 3
3. How can we make prayer a lifestyle and not a need-based activity?
4. Do you have time set for intimate fellowship with God? Explain.
5. What lessons have you learnt from Jesus' fellowship with the Father, and how will you apply them?

Conclusion

With multitudes pressing on Him for teachings and the miraculous, it was possible for Jesus to have neglected His devotional life. Yet, none of these could drown His priority for constant communion with God. Jesus often withdrew from the pressures of life to be with the Father in prayer. In like manner, we must consciously make time despite our busy schedules to be alone with God in prayer. Prayer must not be an emergency fortress we run to only in times of trouble. Rather, the desire to have intimate fellowship with God must drive us to regular communion with Him through prayer. There are higher heights and deeper truths in God that can only be accessed through constant fellowship in prayer. This is the way our Master Jesus went and we His servants must follow His example.

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WEEK 15

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD

Main Text: John 19:1-7

Memory verse: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life - John 3:16*

Introduction

The punishment that sin brought on humanity is huge for which reason we lost the opportunity to have fellowship with God. To restore this break in fellowship, a series of attempts were initiated. Humans turned to smaller gods while God demanded periodic sacrifices for sins. For the redemptive plan of God to be fulfilled, sinless blood needed to be shed. For, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin” (Hebrews 9:22). Easter therefore, signifies the love of God as He reconciled humanity to Himself. It is never about excursions, parties, going to beaches or engaging in other social events. Rather, it is a season of reflection on the great love God has shown to humanity.

Questions For Discussion

1. What form of suffering did Jesus undergo?
Verses 2-3

2. What happened when the chief priests and officers saw Jesus? Verse 6
3. Why did the priests insist on the death of Jesus Christ? Verse 7
4. What were Jesus' last words on the cross? John 19:30
5. What does Easter mean to you?

Conclusion

Our memory verse is one of the most quoted passages in the Bible. It is one of the foundational scriptures of the Christian faith. Jesus suffered at the hands of the soldiers and was crucified because He said He was the son of God. The good news is, He resurrected from death to give us hope that He has overcome death. Romans 5:8 tells us that, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us". How would we have managed the overwhelming sacrifices for the atonement of our sins? How could we have overcome the bondage of sin? Above all, how could we have reconciled with God? This season of Easter reminds us of the great love God has shown to all humankind. The least we can do as believers is to replicate this love by telling others about Jesus and showing them love.

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WEEK 17

OFFICERS' APPRECIATION DAY
HONOURING THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

Main Text: 1 Timothy 5:17-19

Memory Verse: *Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.* - 1 Thessalonians 5:12

Introduction

Officers in The Church of Pentecost contribute immensely to the work of ministry. They enable the church reach out and disciple more people in fulfilling the Great Commission. In the case of the early church, the Apostle Paul reached the world through a team of committed leaders some of whom encountered difficult situations in the discharge of their duties. Trophimus was left sick in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20) while Epaphroditus almost died risking his life to support Paul (Phil 2:25-30). Similarly, the success story of The Church of Pentecost is full of the selfless and sacrificial services of unpaid officers. Against this background, the celebration of this day must raise the consciousness of our responsibility to these gallant soldiers who labour in keeping watch over our souls.

Questions For Discussion

1. What do you understand by 'double honour'?
1 Timothy 5:17
2. How do the following actions of members affect the commitment of officers?
 - a. Obedience and submission. Hebrews 13:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13
 - b. Praying for leadership. Hebrews 13:18-19
 - c. Regular communication and periodic visitation.
 - d. Financial support. Philippians 4:1, 14-16
3. How have you fared in the above mentioned issues?
4. What would you do differently to honour your officers?

Conclusion

Double honour implies respect and esteem for leadership as well as material support. Thus, though officers of the church are unpaid, we should esteem them and support them materially. Furthermore, members' attitudes and deeds should be a source of encouragement to officers. Submission to their authority, and the joy experienced in seeing members mature in the faith boosts their commitment. Also, kind gestures like visitations, calls, prayers, financial

support and others make officers feel appreciated for the service they render to the local churches. In view of this, conscious effort should be made by believers to honour these selfless officers of the church.

WEEK 18

JESUS, THE TRUE MODEL OF DILIGENCE

Main Text: Mark 1:32-39

Memory Verse: *Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labour* - Proverbs 12:24

Introduction

Diligence can simply be defined as the “constant earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken.” It involves the persistent exertion of body and mind. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ exemplifies this virtue perfectly. As we seek to be an example of Jesus, it is important that we learn from Him in every aspect of our lives. A mature Christian is someone who is a model and a pacesetter; someone who influences others in positive ways according to biblical standards. Our memory verse gives us a hint on what we stand to gain if we are diligent in our work. We live in a dispensation where many people work anyhow as long as they are not found out. In today’s study, we will look at the example Jesus sets for us in working diligently.

Questions For Discussion

1. What did Jesus do in the evening? Verses 32-34
2. What did Jesus tell the disciples when they found Him Verses 37-38

3. How did Jesus work in Galilee? Verse 39
4. What are some hindrances to diligence?
5. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' attitude to work?

Conclusion

Jesus Christ knew that His mandate was to preach the word of God to His generation. He therefore planned, prepared and executed His plan irrespective of the challenges He faced. He arose very early before sunrise to pray and organize His disciples to preach throughout the whole of Galilee. Historians describe Galilee as a very hilly environment in the time of Jesus. This however, did not deter Him from preaching in the whole land. Today, many Christians give excuses when they are given assignments that require some form of exertion. The task may be from the workplace, Church or even the community. As we learn from our Master Jesus Christ, it is binding on us as believers, to fulfil our tasks and not give excuses. Jesus is indeed a model of diligence and we must seek to be like Him.

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WEEK 20
PUC DAY
GODLY WISDOM FOR FUTURE LEADERS

Main Text: James 3:13-17

Memory Verse: *But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere* - James 3:17

Introduction

The Church has a mandate to influence society in all spheres of life with the wisdom of God. However, this can only happen if the church extends her influence beyond the confines of church buildings. Thus, the church's involvement in training the human resource of the country brings on board what may be lacking in the secular approach to education. In her involvement in providing secular education, the church is able to direct the process of human development towards God's objective for humankind. To realise this objective, believers must be willing to provide support for this noble agenda.

Questions For Discussion

1. What are the characteristics of the wisdom of the world? Verses 14-15

2. What are the characteristics of the wisdom of God?
Verse 17
3. How can the church inculcate the wisdom of God in the future leaders of the country?
4. What will happen if the future leaders of the country have all the professional training but lack the wisdom of God?
5. Why is it important for the church to be involved in providing formal education?

Conclusion

Educational institutions are centres of research and training. Thus, it is important to inculcate godly perspectives in the training of these future leaders so that society will be ruled by the principles of the Kingdom of God. To achieve this, the church must enter the arena of formal education since a passive approach will not yield the desired results. Formal training with godly wisdom will equip our future leaders for every good work. On the contrary, if the judges, lawyers, doctors, nurses, and teachers produced by our educational institutions lack moral capital, then whatever we build through these professionals will crumble on the weak foundation of dishonesty, bribery, corruption, abuse of office and neglect of duty. In view of this, let us all join hands in providing financial and other support to the church's efforts in fulfilling this noble task.

WEEK 21

PEMEM WEEK

FATHERS, THE SPIRITUAL TEACHERS OF FAMILIES

Main Text: Jeremiah 35:1-10

Memory Verse: *We have obeyed everything our forefather Jehonadab son Rekab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters have ever drunk wine -*
Jeremiah 35:8

Introduction

Godly instructions from fathers play a very important role in the lives of children. Such instructions when instilled early, provide direction for children throughout their lives. From the passage, we observe that Rekab's descendants would not yield to any instruction contrary to the direction given them by their forefathers. The Men's Ministry of the Church of Pentecost seeks to empower men to fulfil their priestly roles in their families among other objectives. In today's study, we shall examine the role of the father as a spiritual teacher in the home.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was God's instruction to Jeremiah? Verse 2
2. How did Jeremiah carry out the order given him by God? Verses 3-5

3. Discuss the responses the Rekabites gave. Verses 6-8
4. How important is a father's godly instruction to the spiritual life of his Children?
5. What lessons have you learnt from the study?

Conclusion

God used the faithfulness of Rekab's descendants to illustrate the importance of yielding to the requirements of God, Such was God's confidence in the faithfulness of the Rekabites that He instructed Jeremiah to test their obedience by offering them wine. True to their unwavering stand, they refused the wine offered them because their forefathers had instructed them not to take wine. The lesson in this passage is that when fathers take their position as teachers of godly instruction, the generations after them will still hold on to those instructions years after they have left the scene. They can do this through instituting and heading family devotions, teaching godly values at the least opportunity so they can become models of godliness. Fathers have a huge responsibility to act as Priests for their families among other responsibilities such as providing for the family. This will ensure that, the generations after them will be examples of Christ in all spheres of their endeavours.

WEEK 22

THE POWER OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Main Text: John 3:1-10

Memory Verse: *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry* - 2 Timothy 4:5

Introduction

Personal Evangelism is one of the most effective evangelistic methods, yet it is assuming a downward trend in modern societies. Many people find it more convenient to be part of mass forms of evangelism such as rallies, crusades, distribution of tracts and gospel concerts but only a few consciously involved in Personal Evangelism. In our passage for study, we read about Jesus Christ engaging Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council on his salvation. The interaction between Jesus and Nicodemus provides us with a perfect example for engaging in personal evangelism.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why did Nicodemus go to Jesus? Verses 1-2
2. Jesus' response in John 3:3 was aimed at evangelizing Nicodemus, Discuss.
3. What does it mean to be born again? John 1:12

4. Is it possible for one to be very religious and yet not born again? Discuss.
5. How can we encourage personal evangelism in our families, churches and societies?

Conclusion

In spite of His heavy schedule in the day, Jesus welcomed Nicodemus even though he came at night. He considered every opportunity as an open door to preach the gospel of God's kingdom. Nicodemus needed to be born again and it had to take Jesus to witness and expose him to this mystery. The new birth comes about when we believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross, that is, believing in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. From the passage, we realize that Nicodemus was a religious leader but was not born again. In the same vein, there are many who go through church activities like baptism and communion and yet, are not born again. This is the more reason we cannot disregard personal evangelism for there are more "Nicodemuses" in our various churches than we think.

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WEEK 24

REACHING THE ELITE WITH THE GOSPEL

Main Text: Luke 19:1-10

Memory Verse: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost* - Luke 19:10

Introduction

In this study, Jesus provides us another perfect example to follow. He does this with His passionate desire to reach out to the lost at all cost. His aim as seen in the passage was to reach out to the elite and rich who are neglected in society. Such people hardly approached with the gospel because of their position and status. Under Roman rule, the Jews were subjected to taxes; they therefore, considered it offensive for a Jew to be collecting taxes for the Romans; Zacchaeus was no exception. His condition was also worsened because he used the opportunity to make dishonest gain. Normally, no one would want to associate with such people, let alone share the gospel with them. Yet God loves such people too and Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus provides a beautiful model we can emulate.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who was Zacchaeus? Verse 2

2. What was his desire and how did he meet it?
Verses 3-4
3. How did Jesus reach out to Zacchaeus? Verses 5-7
4. Identify some of the elite groups in our communities.
Why is it difficult to share the gospel with them?
5. How can we address the challenges of taking the gospel to the elite in our communities?

Conclusion

The agenda of Jesus was to seek and save that which was lost and He pursued it even to the cross. Like Zacchaeus, the rich tax collector who desired to see Jesus, there are lots of people who appear fulfilled physically and materially but are empty in their souls and are yearning for Christ. These include politicians, chiefs, business leaders, professionals, diplomats and many more. Many times, we are restrained because of fear, ill-preparation, inferiority complex and financial constraints. But like Zacchaeus, who climbed the tree, some of these people are searching for an opportunity to respond to the gospel. We could therefore, adopt various methods including breakfast meetings, corporate social outings, and evangelism dinners among others in reaching out to the elite.

WEEK 25

FORGIVING THOSE WHO OFFEND US

Main Text: Luke 23:33-43

Memory verse: Jesus said, *"Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."* - Luke 23:34a

Introduction

Generally, it is difficult for people to forgive those who cause them pain. Rather, it is easy to harbour bitterness toward those who hurt us, often finding good reason for our actions. Sometimes, the behaviour has been to curse, hate and seek revenge, making no room for forgiveness. This attitude contradicts the Lord's teachings that we love and forgive our enemies. Our study highlights forgiveness in the life of Christ. As He hung on the cross in pain, He spent His limited energy and breath to ask for forgiveness for those who crucified Him.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did the people treat Jesus? Verses 35-37
2. What was Jesus' response to suffering? Verse 34
3. Jesus did not pray a vindictive pray. Why? Verse 34
4. How do we respond to similar treatment from people?
5. Share your testimony on forgiveness.

Conclusion

Forgiveness is to pardon those who hurt us. The lesson in this study is that Jesus Christ forgave people who neither asked to be forgiven nor showed any sign of remorse. These are some of the circumstances we face that really hinder forgiveness. The challenge is, how ready we are to forgive even those who ask for forgiveness. This example of Christ must be implanted in our minds as we strive to be examples of Christ in our generation. The Bible entreats us to forgive those who sin against us as our heavenly Father also forgives us our sins.

WEEK 26

HUMILITY, AN ATTITUDE OF CHRIST

Main Text: Philippians 2:1-8

Memory Verse: *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* - Matthew 11:29

Introduction

Humility is defined as the quality of having a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance, rank or worth. Christ is the grand example of humility. The gospel narratives depict Him as meek and lowly in heart.

Christ was fully aware of His status as the Son of God, the eternal Word of God, of the same essence as the Father. Yet, He humbled Himself by putting aside these divine attributes and became like us so that He might die for our sins. During His life on earth, He taught His disciples, the virtue of humility. Life lessons like the example of the little child (Matt 18:1-4), the choice of seats at a banquet, (Luke 14:7-11) and the washing of the disciples' feet (John 13:5) illustrate the humility of Jesus.

Questions For Discussion

1. What attitudes are we expected to portray?
Verses 3-5
2. What did Jesus do in order to become man?
Verse 7
3. How will you describe Christ's humility? Verses 6-8
4. What are some practical things to do in order to cultivate the spirit of humility?
5. Discuss some lessons you learnt from the study.

Conclusion

In today's main text, the Apostle Paul describes how the Lord Jesus Christ intentionally set aside His divinity in order to become human. In the memory verse, the Lord Himself invites us to learn this cardinal virtue from Him. We also learnt that humility is not an emotional feeling. Rather, it is an act of the will, where we make deliberate effort to reflect the attitudes of Christ in all areas of our lives. To be humble therefore, we need to set aside arrogance, boastfulness, haughtiness and embrace virtues like meekness, lowliness, and gentleness as demonstrated by Christ.

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WEEK 28

THE WEDDING AT EDEN

Main Text: Genesis 2:18-25

Memory Verse: *The Lord God said, "it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him"*
- Genesis 2:18

Introduction

God Himself "officiated" the first "wedding" between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He saw that Adam needed a helper and that he would not be complete without one. He therefore, created Eve to be that helpmate who was as good as Adam himself. She would help Adam work the ground and fill the earth. Adam saw Eve as that wonderful mate who would make him complete. Thus he exclaimed, "this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of a man". Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife to become one flesh (Gen 2:23-24).

God upholds marriage and desires that couples would live happily, as they complement each other and work together to fulfil His plan for creation and their personal lives.

Questions For Discussion

1. According to verse 18, what was God's plan for Adam?
2. What was lacking in Adam's life? Verse 20
3. What was Adam's response when Eve was brought to him? Verses 22, 23
4. What do you understand by the statement, "a helper suitable to him"? Verse 18
5. How should Christian couples fulfil God's original plan concerning marriage?

Conclusion

God created Adam and Eve to fill the earth with their kind and build happy families. They were also to teach these families to love the Lord and care for His creation. They were made to complement each other, so that the presence of one would make the other complete. God wants all couples to be happy in their marriages as He intended for Adam and Eve. He wants couples to respect and love each other, knowing that one was made for the other. Every Christian husband or wife must through humility, love and mutual respect for each other, make the love of Christ known to all.

WEEK 29

WOMEN'S WEEK

DEBORAH, A WOMAN OF FAITH

Main Text: Judges 4:1-10, 15-21

Memory Verse: *Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time - Judges 4:4 (NKJV)*

Introduction

Have you heard of names like Christiana Obo, Eunice Addison, Esme Serebuor and other prominent women in the history of The Church of Pentecost? These were women who stood up and made great impact on the Church. In today's passage, we will learn how God gave Israel into the hands of the Canaanites who oppressed them for 20 years because of their sin. They suffered under enemy's domination until they cried unto God for help. The answer to their problem was Deborah, a woman of faith.

The text encourages women to take up challenges and defend the course of the weak, vulnerable and helpless just as Deborah, the prophetess did.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the situation of Israel at the time of Deborah? Verses 1-3
2. Who was Deborah and what was her vocation? Verses 4-5
3. How did Deborah prove her faith in God during Israel's crisis? Verses 6-7
4. Who was Barak, and why did he insist that Deborah went with him to the battle? Verses 6, 9
5. What useful lessons can we learn from the passage?

Conclusion

In today's lesson, we learnt that God is ready to use anybody whether male or female to fulfil His perfect will. What He requires is that we put our faith and trust in Him. From the passage, Barak was the commander of the army and Deborah was a prophetess. However, when the men were afraid to lead the people to war, a woman of faith, Deborah rose to the occasion and led the armies of Israel to victory. Deborah believed so much in God and was disappointed at the way Barak approached the issue. God wants to have faith in Him and not doubts. Deborah honoured the LORD faithfully and her faith was richly rewarded.

WEEK 30

FOCUSING ON YOUR MARRIAGE

Main Text: Genesis 3:1-19

Memory Verse: *But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"* - Genesis 3:9

Introduction

Adam and Eve lived happily as a couple in the Garden of Eden until that day when the Devil [Serpent] altered what could have been a very fulfilling life for humankind. Through deceit, Satan got both Adam and Eve to disobey God by eating of the forbidden fruit. He first caught the attention of the woman who in turn won the husband. In their bid to gain more knowledge and become like God, they lost everything. Marriages can be happy and lasting when we keep focus on God's word and keep watch over each other's spirituality.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did the Serpent deceive the woman into eating the fruit of knowledge of good and evil? Verses 1-5
2. What were the consequences of the disobedience of Adam and Eve? Verses 13, 19
3. How does our relationship with God affect our marriages?

4. What things can take our focus from our marriages?
5. What have you learnt from today's discussions?

Conclusion

It is important to keep focus in marriage. As intended by God people marry because of the love they have for their spouses and often the desire to uphold the love of God. Since love is from God, we cannot continue in love when our relationship with God is broken. Couples who are very close to the LORD are close with each other and those who focus on Christ are focused on their marriages. We need to avoid friends and relatives who are likely to hinder us from fulfilling God's mandate for our lives and marriages. Many storms of deception could come against our marriages, the greatest being the threat of divorce. However, we have a responsibility to keep focused because God hates divorce (Mal 2:16).

WEEK 31

HONOURING THE MARRIAGE VOWS

Main Text: Matthew 19:3-12

Memory Verse: *So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate*
- Matthew 19:6

Introduction

The Pharisees tested Jesus whether divorce was permitted for any reason. However, Jesus made it clear that couples who are bonded in marriage are not to be separated. Differences in temperaments, cultural incompatibility, academic gap and upbringing among others pose challenges to couples and make living together very difficult. Just as Jesus has loved us irrespective of our shortcomings, He expects spouses to make sacrificial allowances for the mistakes and errors of each other. Though the Jews allowed divorce, that was not God's original plan, for Jesus indicated "it was not so from the beginning."

Questions For Discussion

1. What did the Pharisees seek to know about marriage? Verse 3
2. What were God's intentions for marriage? Verses 4-6

3. Why did Moses permit divorce among the Hebrews? Verse 8
4. What are some of the obstacles to a happy marriage?
5. How can we keep our marriage vows even when there are conflicts?

Conclusion

Marriage is one of the greatest human rites of passage that is celebrated in all cultures and religions in the world. People over the centuries have looked forward to couples living happily in marriage until death. This is the original plan of God; that what He “has joined together, let no one separate.” Divorce was permitted in the Hebrew culture because the people were hard to teach. Over the years, people have sought to justify grounds upon which divorce must be allowed; and these range from domestic to social or cultural issues. Nevertheless, we must endeavour to keep the marriage vows by following the teachings of Christ. Every couple must be determined to make their marriage work and with a sincere and loving heart declare daily, “till death do us part.”

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WEEK 33

CARING FOR THE BEREAVED

Main Text: Luke 7:11-17

Memory Verse: *When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."* - Luke 7:13

Introduction

Throughout the gospels, we see evidence of the compassionate heart of Jesus Christ. His devotion to offering support to the needy and sick who came His way is clearly evident.. Prominent among them is how He gladly supported the bereaved. As can be seen in the passage for our study, Jesus Christ was entering Nain when the corpse of a widow's son was being carried out to be buried. Moved by compassion, He stopped the procession, encouraged the widow and raised the dead young man.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was happening as Jesus was entering Nain? Verses 11-12
2. What was the state of the woman mentioned in the passage? Verse 12

- 3 What did the Lord do when He saw the widow?
Verses 13-15
4. Discuss the various ways we can care for those who are bereaved.
5. Discuss how we can improve the welfare system in the local church.

Conclusion

The widow's condition was terrible because she had lost her husband and an only son. Jesus was moved with compassion when He and the disciples entered the city of Nain. Like the widow, many people in our churches, fellowships and Home Cell units are from time to time hit with various degrees of tragedy including bereavement. This is normally the time we can demonstrate Christ-like compassion through generous donations, words of encouragement, visitations, intercessory prayers and show of genuine love and concern.

WEEK 34

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

Main Text: Acts 15:5-9

Memory Verse: *Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."* - Acts 15:1

Introduction

The Gospel is always presented to people in a cultural setting. As a result, there are cultural challenges whenever the Gospel is preached from one culture to another. These challenges may be geographical or generational. As read in today's passage, some of the Jewish believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees insisted that the Gentile believers needed to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses in order to be saved. We will discuss ways by which we can avoid putting cultural yokes on others in our presentation of the gospel.

Questions For Discussion

1. What did the believers from Judea insist the Gentile believers do, and why? Verse 5

2. What was the response of Paul and Barnabas to this cultural imposition? Verse 2
3. What showed that God accepted the Gentile believers without discrimination? Verses 8, 9
4. In what ways do we also put cultural yokes on people's necks in the church today?
5. How can we refrain from imposing culture on others and allow them to serve God sincerely from a pure heart?

Conclusion

The problem of how Christians should approach cultural issues has been an age long one. The apostles, however, concluded that since God Himself did not discriminate against the Gentiles but gave them the Holy Spirit as He gave to the Jewish believers, there was no need to put such a yoke on the Gentile believers. Sometimes we also expect others to serve God from our cultural perspectives. We should therefore, refrain from putting on others yokes that may not affect their salvation. To avoid this we need to genuinely approach all cultural issues from the scriptural point of view and in the spirit of love.

WEEK 35

BREAKING THROUGH CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS

Main Text: John 4:5-26

Memory Verse: *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* - Galatians 3:28

Introduction

Culture constitutes the ideas, behaviours and customs of a group or community of people. Each ethnic group has its own peculiar cultural behaviours. These behaviours could create cultural barriers that may hinder healthy inter-ethnic relations, or promote conflicts and wars. Also, some tribes do not encourage inter-marriages. These behaviours also existed in the days of Jesus Christ between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jews considered themselves closer to God and saw the Samaritans as outcasts. They had nothing in common. It is against this backdrop that Jesus demonstrated that such cultural barriers must not exist in the kingdom of God. In this study, we will learn how the Lord's interaction with the Samaritan woman brought salvation to a whole city.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who was Jesus speaking with? Verse 7

2. What was the woman's reply and why? Verse 9
3. Under what circumstances do we hear such replies in our societies?
4. What was the outcome of the interaction between Jesus and the woman? John 4:39-40
5. In what ways will the study help you to relate better with others from different cultural backgrounds?

Conclusion

Though we come from various cultural backgrounds, we should not allow our differences to create divisions and conflict. Some parents sometimes refuse inter-marriages with the reason that the two tribes involved have nothing in common. As indicated in our memory verse, once we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, we become one people with no wall of division. The interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman led to the salvation of Samaria. As Christians, we should promote peace and allow the Gospel we preach to cut across all cultural barriers.

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ENCOURAGING OBEDIENCE IN CHILDREN

Main Text: Luke 2:41-52

Memory Verse: *Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart* - Luke 2:51

Introduction

We live in a generation where children are increasingly becoming very disobedient to their parents (2 Tim 3:2). Parents and guardians employ a number of approaches including the use of the rod to train their children. Even though the use of the rod can instil discipline into children, it has not always yielded the desired results. In this study, we will look at the approach adopted by Joseph and Mary to bring up Jesus as an obedient child.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the reaction of Jesus' parents when they found Him after a hectic search? Verse 48
2. What do you understand by Jesus' statement in Verse 49?
3. Jesus was obedient to His earthly parents though they did not use abusive words or the rod on Him. Is that possible in our generation?

4. How can we adopt the approach used by Jesus' parents so as to encourage obedience in children of this generation?

Conclusion

We have seen from the lesson that the parents of 12-year-old Jesus at a point were disappointed when they could not find Him. He had stayed in Jerusalem after a festival while His parents went on their way back home. They had to search for Him and only found Him after three days. Jesus was surprised that they were searching for Him at places other than the temple (His Father's house). This is because, in the Jewish culture, the twelfth year was the final year for a Jewish boy to enter into full religious life of the synagogue. It is, however, surprising that when the parents found Him, they did not resort to verbal or physical abuse. The Bible records that the boy Jesus followed His parents and was obedient to them. This approach by Jesus' parents affirms that, obedience can be nurtured in the heart of children without resorting to verbal and physical abuse. It is only the Holy Spirit who births genuine obedience in the hearts of people.

WEEK 38

CHILDREN'S WEEK

JESUS, STILL FRIEND OF CHILDREN

Main Text: Matthew 19:13-15

Memory Verse: *Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him.* - Psalm 127:3

Introduction

As we celebrate Children's Week, it is important to emphasize again the Lord's deep love for children and their welfare. When the disciples wanted to drive the children away, the Lord wanted them on centre stage. As our world gets more depraved, children are made to bear the brunt of societal evils. The list of wrongs perpetrated against children is endless; physical abuse, sexual abuse, child trafficking and child labour. Children are recruited to fight in wars. Street children have become a common feature in most cities of the world with the attendant vices of drug abuse, robberies, and prostitution, among others. As individuals, families, Churches, corporate entities and governments, we all need to work harder to champion the welfare of children.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why did the parents bring their children to Jesus? Verse 13
2. What did the disciples do? Verse 13
3. What will happen to those who cause children to sin? Matthew 18:6
4. Mention some social evils perpetrated against children.
5. As individuals and communities, how can we help to eradicate these evils from our society?

Conclusion

It is important to bring children to Jesus as the parents did and commit them to the grace of God. Jesus declares that children also belong to the kingdom of God. Therefore, it is the duty of believing parents to nurture their children and inculcate in them the values of the kingdom of God. Parents are trustees of their children's will and are empowered by God to guide and direct them. We see in our neighbourhoods, schools and streets children suffering all kinds of abuse silently. Let us be their voice and shout it loud from the mountain tops anytime we encounter a child subjected to any form of abuse. Jesus strongly warns of consequences for those who cause children to sin. In the same vein, those who bless children shall receive rewards from the Lord (Matt 18:5).

WEEK 39

**RAISING GODLY CHILDREN
IN OUR GENERATION**

Main Text: Mark 10: 13-16

Memory Verse: *But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" - Mark 10:14 (NKJV)*

Introduction

One of the blessings God gave to Adam and Eve was for them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:20). After the flood, God pronounced the same blessing on Noah and his family (Gen 9:1). It is obvious that one way we can multiply is through birth. God expects our offspring to be God-fearing and a light to the world. In our world today, some children are rebellious to the things of God. Some are involved in petty stealing, drug abuse, armed robbery, among others. Others have become street children just because they lacked parental love and care. Thus, our responsibility as parents goes beyond dedicating our children to the Lord.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who brought the children to Jesus, and what was the purpose? Verse 13

2. Discuss the reaction of the disciples when the children were brought to Christ. Verse 13
3. Why do you think the disciples behaved this way?
4. How did Jesus receive the children? Verse 16
5. In what ways can parents, siblings, and others hinder children from coming to Christ?

Conclusion

Parents and others can hinder children through their bad examples from coming to Christ. These may include non-involvement in church activities, use of abusive language, quarrelling, fighting, lying and depriving children the right to education and food. The disciples may have considered the children to be a nuisance to Jesus. However, Jesus rebuked them and blessed the children. It is the responsibility of adults to train up children in the way of the Lord so they will not depart from it (Prov 22:6). We cannot neglect the development of children. We have to ensure that they grow and remain in the Lord. Jesus, our true example, welcomes children into His bosom. We should also do likewise.

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WEEK 41

RELATING WITH IN-LAWS
(MOSES AND JETHRO)

Main text: Exodus 18:1-27

Memory Verse: *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone* - Romans 12:18

Introduction

One of the best sources from which to learn and address the issues of in-laws is the Bible. The story of Moses and his father-in-law is a good example for all Christian families. It is common knowledge that living at peace with in-laws, promotes healthy and happy families. The statement, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24) is linked to the occasion when God presented Eve to Adam. Though one flesh, couples would still need to connect with their in-laws. In today’s study, we shall discuss how such relationships engender mutual benefits for couples and their in-laws.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did Moses relate with his father-in-law?
Verses 7-11
2. How did Jethro go about his advice to Moses?
Verses 13-20

3. What do you understand by the terms “leave” and “cleave” as used in Genesis 2:24?
4. Suggest ways by which couples could relate well with their in-laws.
5. How can Christian couples resolve conflicts with their in-laws?

Conclusion

The word leave is translated from the Hebrew word “azab” meaning to forsake, leave behind, let alone or abandon. “Dabaq” (Hebrew) translated ‘cleave’ means to stick like glue, pursue or hold fast to something. God has given us a direct command to be glued together as one with our spouses, and thus create a new family structure independent of all others. However, seeking timely counsel from our parents and in-laws could be very helpful. Moses received counsel from Jethro, his father in-law on issues concerning his leadership in Israel, which proved to be very helpful.

WEEK 42

RELATING WITH IN-LAWS
(RUTH AND NAOMI)

Main Text: Ruth 2:1-18

Memory Verse: *But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God"* - Ruth 1:16

Introduction

Relating well with in-laws is one major area of concern for most couples. While some glide easily into good relations and bonding with in-laws, others experience a hard time trying to get along well with in-laws. Thankfully, the Bible provides examples of cordial and supportive in-law relationships. These include Ruth and Naomi, Peter and his mother-in-law and Jethro who guided Moses. The story of Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, will be discussed to help us glean lessons on how to build good relationships with our in-laws.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did Ruth relate with Naomi? Ruth 1:15-17
2. Why did Ruth find favour in the eyes of Boaz? Verses 9-11

3. How did Ruth take care of Naomi? Verses 16-18
4. Discuss some of the challenges married people face in relating to their in-laws.
5. How can Christian couples resolve conflicts with their in-laws?

Conclusion

After several persuasions to stay in Moab, Ruth made a vow and which expressed her loyalty and deep love for her mother-in-law. With the death of Naomi's son who was Ruth's husband, none was bitter towards the other, but rather, a harmonious relationship existed between them. In Bethlehem, where they had settled after leaving Moab, Ruth served her mother in-law so well that news of her good attitude reached Boaz, who eventually married Ruth. In-laws come across with different cultures, temperaments and expectations which make bonding challenging. Though we cannot prescribe a 'one fix all' solution to these challenges, we can learn from such good examples in Scripture that it is possible to live in harmony once we decide to love and accommodate the weaknesses of our in-laws.

WEEK 43
PENSIONS DAY
HONOURING OUR RETIRED
MINISTERS AND WIDOWS

Main Text: 1 Timothy 5:17

Memory Verse: *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith* - Hebrews 13:7

Introduction

The current state of our great church is the result of the help of the Holy Spirit and the hard work of our Retired Ministers and officers. To appreciate and honour our heroes with a “double honour” is biblically, morally and culturally appropriate. God intended for a beautiful relationship to exist between the Church members and leaders during and after active ministry. Our study today is to help us understand how to relate appropriately with our retired ministers, their wives as well as widows.

Questions For Discussion

1. What do you understand by ‘double honour’?
1 Timothy 5:17
2. Do retired ministers, widows and officers deserve ‘double honour’? Explain your answer.

3. How can we meet the following needs of retired ministers and officers?
 - a. Social or Relational
 - b. Financial
 - c. Spiritual
 - d. fellowship
4. Are there any hindrances to meeting these needs?
5. How can we overcome these hindrances?

Conclusion

Meeting the needs of retired ministers, officers and their spouses is the responsibility of all believers. The needs may be relational (Calling them, visiting them, remembering their birthdays, etc.), fellowship (meeting with them for worship and prayer), spiritual (bearing them up in prayers) and financial (supporting their health expenses, utility bills and general upkeep). Retired ministers should not be seen as a burden but a blessing to the church. Some hindrances to meeting the needs of retired leaders may be negligence and inability to make a conscious effort to visit and care for them. The local church must lead this charge through constant reminders and encouragement to members. Also, members should always remember retired ministers and their wives through visitations, phone calls and financial support. Do you know any retired minister or widow? Have you ever called them or blessed them financially? Take a step today.

WEEK 44

LOVE, THE NEW COMMANDMENT

Main Text: John 13:34-35

Memory Verse: *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another*
- John 13:34

Introduction

For many Christians, loving our neighbours as ourselves, (Matt 22:39), is a fairly manageable task. Our Master Jesus just before He died, ushered His followers into a new dimension of love. Here, it is no more about treating your neighbours as you would want them treat you, rather, it involves loving your neighbour as Christ would. Romans 5:8 states, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This presents an interesting feature on the kind of love Christ has for the Church.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the new commandment Jesus gave to His disciples? How is that different from "love your neighbour as yourself"? Verse 34
2. How do you understand, "one another"? Verse 34

3. What is the standard of the love we should have for one another? Verse 34
4. How would all men know that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? Verse 35
5. How has Jesus loved you? How can you demonstrate that love to others?

Conclusion

Love is action. No one can demonstrate the depths of true love more than what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for humanity. He set the example for believers to show love to one another and to the world by what He did. Loving others as we would have others love us is fairly easy. However, to love others as Christ did is a very challenging task; to continually show love to that sinning brother or sister, showing love to that family member who does not show us any form of respect and showing love to colleagues at work who openly dislike us is what Christ teaches. That is the kind of love our Saviour requires of us. Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised the dead, cast out demons and preached the Good News to people from whom He stood to gain nothing. We must follow in the footsteps of our Master.

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WEEK 46

DISTRICT/LOCAL INPUT

The District Minister or local presiding elder can provide the direction of study for this day. There are also extra scripts available. The District or local assembly could choose any of these scripts for this purpose.

WEEK 47

ATTRIBUTES OF TRUE LOVE

Main Text: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Memory Verse: *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love* - 1 Corinthians 13:13

Introduction

Love is a word that is commonly used in everyday discourse. It connotes different things to different people. However, the foundation of true love is Jesus Christ. Many individuals show love in various ways. For many people, giving of gifts to others is a good demonstration of love. In today's passage, Paul teaches us about the real attributes of love. As we strive to be good examples of Jesus, we must endeavour to show love as He does. Our study today focuses on the true nature of love.

Questions For Discussion

1. What are the attributes of love? Verses 4-8
2. "Love does not delight in evil". Verse 6. Discuss
3. Why is love considered the greatest virtue?
4. In which ways can Christians show love to others?

5. What are the hindrances to showing love and how can we overcome them?

Conclusion

Love is patient, love is kind; it does not envy, it does not boast and is not proud. These are but a few of the attributes of love. Human as we are, we sometimes find these attributes challenging. Our human tendencies seem to override the need to show love to others. We see in today's study that love is greater than faith and hope. This is an interesting revelation as it gives us an understanding that if we persist in showing love, we will definitely be rewarded. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything in return. In doing this, our reward would be great (Luke 6:35). Be an agent of love.

WEEK 48

LOVE IN ACTION

Main Text: Luke 10:25-36

Memory Verse: *Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth* - 1 John 3:18

Introduction

Our discussions on love continue in today's study. There is a popular saying that "actions speak louder than words." We shall take a critical look at how we can put our love for Christ in action. Our memory verse today tells us not to love with words but to follow our words of love with actions. We usually declare to the Lord that we love Him, but how do we demonstrate our love to Jesus and people we come into contact with? We have learnt from our previous study that God's love is unconditional. In the same way, we must also show unconditional love to others irrespective of our relationship with them.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did the expert in the law test Jesus? Verse 25
2. What was Jesus' response to his question? Verses 26-28

3. How did the priest and the Levite fail to show their love? Verses 31-32
4. How did the Samaritan demonstrate His love? Verses 33-35
5. To what extent can we demonstrate our love to others?

Conclusion

Demonstrating our love for God is critical if we want to be good examples of Jesus Christ. There are various ways in which we can demonstrate our love for God and others. These include, comfort and care for members and colleagues who are bereaved and attending the weddings of our members. Others are, giving our time, finances and other resources wholeheartedly to God. The Priest and the Levite refused to help the afflicted man. Sometimes we behave like them; we pretend not to see the challenges people are going through while we spend time in religious activities. Our study today encourages us to love not only in word but also in deed.

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WEEK 50

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Main Text: John 14:5-11

Memory Verse: *"Very Truly I tell you", Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" - John 8:58*

Introduction

Jesus Christ is God incarnate. This means that even though He is God, He took on the form of man and lived among us. This makes Him fully God and fully man. The focus of today's study is to discuss the "God nature" of Christ, also known as His divinity. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is so vital that the New Testament has many references to it. The conversation between Jesus Christ and His disciples as indicated in today's passage, clearly brings out important lessons on the subject for our study.

Questions For Discussion

1. Which two disciples questioned Jesus in today's reading? Verses 5, 8
2. Identify the aspects of Jesus' answers which reveal His divinity? Verses 7, 9

3. How do you understand the statement, "Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father" Verse 9
4. From today's study, on what bases would you say Jesus is God?
5. How will you explain the divinity of Jesus to a friend who does not understand it?

Conclusion

The questions raised by Thomas and Philip, bring out important lessons about the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He told Thomas that "If you really know Me, you will know My Father", and to Philip, He said "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father". By these answers, Jesus was pointed out to them that He is God. Today's memory verse points out that when the Jews questioned Jesus about how He had knowledge of Abraham, He responded that "before Abraham was I am". It should be noted that the name "I Am" is attributed to only God (Exo 3:14). Again, the Apostle Paul points out that even though Jesus was in the very nature God, He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (Phil 2:6). Above all, Jesus Himself declared in John 10:30' "I and My Father are one." These and many more Scriptures prove that Jesus is God.

WEEK 51

PEACE ON EARTH

Main text: Luke 2:4-15

Memory Verse: *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests”* - Luke 2:14

Introduction

Christmas is a season that is eagerly awaited by many people around the world. It comes with family reunions, get-togethers, and corporate dinners, among others. However, the real reason for the season of Christmas is Jesus Christ. Christmas commemorates the birth of the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. Christians all over the world mark this day with joyous celebrations. In our memory verse, we learn that the birth of Jesus Christ has released peace on earth. Christmas is, therefore, a time of reconciliation, a season of friendship as well as an opportunity to tell others about Jesus Christ.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why did Joseph go to Bethlehem in Judea? Verses 4-5
2. What was the angel's message to the shepherds? Verses 10-12

3. What was the message of the heavenly host?
Verses 13-14
4. What does Christmas mean to you?
5. How can we be agents of peace and reconciliation to others?

Conclusion

The change in weather, the carols that fill the atmosphere, the gatherings and conventions are but a few of the characteristics of Christmas. As we have discussed, the true purpose of Christmas is to celebrate the birth of the only Saviour of humankind. Even angels could not hold their joy at the release of the greatest of all promises. The coming of Jesus fulfils the promise of God to liberate humanity from the bondage of sin. The greatest reconciliation agenda which began in Eden was culminated at Christmas. We must all therefore, reflect on the activities of the year as it draws to an end, and initiate the process of reconciliation where needed.

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HOME CELL

2017 WEEK BY WEEK HOME CELL TABULAR GUIDE

WEEK	DATE	HOME CELL TOPICS	PAGE
JANUARY			
1	1 st	Family Day	110
2	8 th	Thirst For Righteousness	111
3	15 th	Assurance For Fulfillment	113
4	22 nd	Discuss Today's Sermon/Bible Study	115
5	29 th	District/Local/Cell Input	116
FEBRUARY			
6	5 th	Family Day	117
7	12 th	The Lordship Of Christ	118
8	19 th	Jesus Christ, Our Model Of Holiness	120
9	26 th	Holiness, A True Expression Of Love For God	122
MARCH			
10	5 th	Family Day	124
11	12 th	Generosity, The Example Of Christ	125
12	19 th	Calling The Family Together (Family Devotion)	127
13	26 th	District/Local/Cell Input	129
APRIL			
14	2 nd	Family Day	130
15	9 th	Persevering In Obedience Unto Death	131
16	16 th	Easter Sunday	133
17	23 rd	Pastoral Care Groupings/Follow Up and Visitations	134
18	30 th	Interceding For People In Authority	135
MAY			
19	7 th	Family Day	137
20	14 th	Jesus Came To Serve	138
21	21 st	Discuss Today's Sermon/Bible Study	140
22	28 th	District/Local/Cell Input	141
JUNE			
23	4 th	Family Day	142
24	11 th	Preaching Repentance Like Jesus	143
25	18 th	Pastoral Care Groupings/Follow Up and Visitations	145
26	25 th	District/Local/Cell Input	146

JULY			
27	2nd	Family Day	147
28	9th	Submission To People In Authority	148
29	16th	Handling Challenges In The Family	150
30	23rd	Discuss Today's Sermon/Bible Study	152
31	30th	District/Local/Cell Input	153
AUGUST			
32	6th	Family Day	154
33	13th	Feeding The Hungry	155
34	20th	Pastoral Care Groupings/ Follow Up and Visitations	157
35	27th	District/Local/Cell Input	158
SEPTEMBER			
36	3rd	Family Day	159
37	10th	Godly Parenting	160
38	17th	Role Of Children In The Family	162
39	24th	District/Local/Cell Input	164
OCTOBER			
40	1st	Family Day	165
41	8th	Discuss Today's Sermon/Bible Study	166
42	15th	Role Of Fathers In The Family	167
43	22nd	Role Of Mothers In The Family	169
44	29th	District/Local/Cell Input	171
NOVEMBER			
45	6th	Family Day	172
46	13th	Learning Obedience Through Suffering	173
47	20th	Pastoral Care Groupings/ Follow Up and Visitations	175
48	27th	District/Local/Cell Input	176
DECEMBER			
49	5th	Family Day	177
50	12th	Jesus, The Saviour Of The World	178
51	19th	Discuss Today's Sermon/Bible Study	180
52	26th	Christmas Convention	181

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WEEK 2

THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Main Text: Psalm 42:1-2

Memory Verse: *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well* - Matthew 6:33

Introduction

Deep within us, we all long for meaningful connections that satisfy our souls and drive away the shadows of loneliness. However, if we are not careful, we may be looking for true intimacy in the wrong places. There is the need to hunger for righteousness, as it is the only way through which the soul will be satisfied. It is easy to be lured into counterfeit offers of intimacy only to find that they are not what the soul really craves. In our memory verse, the Psalmist teaches us to direct our cravings (thirst) towards God. He indicates that if we do so we will be filled. As in any relationship, intimacy with Jesus Christ has some dynamics that make it grow. We do not experience His fellowship by just saying that we love Him even though that is important. In today's study, we will take a look at how we can direct the desires of our souls towards intimacy with Christ.

Questions For Discussion

1. What does the deer pant for? Verse 1
2. What does the soul of the psalmist pant for? Verse 1
3. How do we “thirst for the living God”? Verse 2
4. How can we “meet with God” as believers?

Conclusion

In today's study, we encounter a psalmist who is desperately yearning for fellowship with God. The human soul which is made up of our will, mind and emotions constantly desires intimacy with God for satisfaction. The Lord Jesus is the only one perfectly suited to satisfy and sustain the desires of our souls. The joy of true intimacy is ours as we grow more deeply conscious of our Lord. We cannot look anywhere else for this satisfaction except the Lord. Our thirst for satisfaction can therefore, be met by the righteousness of God. True intimacy with God that satisfies the soul cannot be bought at the newsstand, neither can it be obtained through exotic vacations and meeting the desires of the flesh. We can therefore encounter the Lord through prayer, fellowship, service to others and sharing the word of God with unbelievers.

WEEK 3

ASSURANCE FOR FULFILMENT

Main Text – John 4:13-30

Memory Verse: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled* - Matthew 5:6

Introduction

In our previous study, we looked at the need to thirst for God and His righteousness. Our hunger and thirst for righteousness has a promise of fulfilment. In our study today, we see that in spite of the Samaritan woman's adulterous state, she desired for the coming Messiah. She received fulfilment of that desire in her meeting with Jesus. Jesus clearly says in our memory verse that, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed and fulfilled. The fulfilment of this promise should be good news to all believers.

Questions For Discussion

1. What will make people not thirst again? Verse 14
2. How did the woman show her thirst and hunger for righteousness? Verse 15
3. How did Jesus meet the needs of the woman? Verses 21-24

4. What is the promise for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness? Matthew 5:6
5. “For they will be filled”. What does this statement mean?

Conclusion

We discussed Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman who had a hunger and thirst to meet the Messiah. Her meeting with Jesus produced a satisfaction that caused her to share with others about Jesus Christ. Today’s study gives us an assurance that, those that hunger and thirst for righteousness will surely be fulfilled; they will be satisfied, contented, and complete in God. This imparts their attitude towards life. Christians should therefore endeavour to desire God and His righteousness above any other thing. The satisfaction that the Lord gives us as believers should compel us to share Jesus with others just as the woman did.

DISCUSS TODAY'S SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

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WEEK 7

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Main Text: Philippians 2:6-11, Colossians 1:15-20

Memory Verse: *Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah - Acts 2:36*

Introduction

A story is told of a Christian passenger in a plane who refused to take an alcoholic beverage. When asked, he exclaimed that he is under the Lordship of his Master Jesus and serves dutifully 24 hours. Conscious submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ is one of the gray areas in the lives of many professing Christians. It seems that many are comfortable to acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour because of His death and resurrection but find it difficult to accept Him as Lord. Hence, we live our lives as people who have been saved but are still 'lords' of our lives. The finality of the Christian faith, however, is to recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of all believers as alluded by Paul (Phil 2:9). The aim of this study is to help us to reflect on the Lordship of Jesus Christ, acknowledge it and bring ourselves completely under His rulership as we seek to be His worthy examples.

Questions For Discussion

1. How does Philippians 2:9-11 relate to the lordship of Jesus Christ?
2. What are some of the attributes of His lordship? Colossians 1:15-18
3. What does it mean to acknowledge Jesus as Lord?
4. Discuss the implications of not yielding to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Romans 6:16
5. In what ways can we yield to the lordship of Jesus?

Conclusion

The Lordship of Jesus Christ as indicated in this study is basically His reign and supremacy in our lives. This involves total submission, obedience and reverence for His person and willingness to yield to Him completely. We acknowledge his lordship by our righteous living, daily devotions in prayer and worship, church attendance, submission to our leaders, paying our vows, forgiving those who offend us and loving one another. As long as we submit to something else instead of Christ, that object becomes our Lord. We become true disciples of Jesus Christ when we consciously make Him Lord of our lives.

WEEK 8

JESUS CHRIST, OUR MODEL OF HOLINESS

Main Text: Hebrews 4:14-16

Memory Verse: *...we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin* - Hebrews 4:15b

Introduction

“To err is human” is a common saying that suggests all human beings have moral limitations and cannot live without wrong. Much as that is true, it is also true that those who accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour and follow Him could by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit live holy lives. It is possible to be holy because Christ set the example for us; He lived without sin though He was tempted in every way as we are being tempted. Since holiness is God’s nature, those who are born of Him can exhibit it. It has been said that to be holy is to be “wholly satisfied with Christ” and reflect His beauty and splendour.

Questions For Discussion

1. What role does Jesus play in our lives? Verse 14
2. In which areas of life was Jesus tempted? Verse 15

3. How did Jesus respond to the temptations of His time? Verse 15
4. Is it possible for us to be holy in this corrupt generation? Discuss
5. How would our holy living influence others?

Conclusion

Though He was God, Jesus came as man, lived on earth and suffered all the temptations we go through – lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the cravings of the sinful nature. However, He was without sin. He is our great high priest who made the most precious sacrifice for our sins before God and continually intercedes for us. Jesus lived such a holy life so, that among other things, He could be a Perfect Model for us to follow. When we focus on our high priest, keep to our confession and boldly depend on Him for strength, we will find grace to be true examples to others.

WEEK 9

**HOLINESS, A TRUE
EXPRESSION OF LOVE FOR GOD**

Main Text: Matthew 4:1-11

Memory Verse: *If you love me, keep my commands -*
John 14:15

Introduction

Holiness is the deep reverence for God through Christ Jesus; the desire to be like Christ and the act of following His example. To be holy is to refuse to obey the devil or not to do his bidding no matter how satisfying it may be. It is not the mere observance of moral principles. Neither is it the act of being right or simply perfect but that a person would be dedicated to God through obedience in Christ.

Jesus demonstrated this when He refused to obey the devil who tempted Him with food, wealth and fame. His will was to obey and respect the Father and this came from deep love. When we deeply love the Lord, we will be willing to obey Him and that will make us holy.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why was Jesus led into the wilderness? Verse 1

2. What did the devil demand from Jesus when He took Him to an exceedingly high mountain?
Verses. 8–10
3. How did Jesus respond to the temptations of Satan?
Verses 4,7,10
4. How can we live holy lives in the face of temptation?

Conclusion

Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil who wanted Him to fail like Adam in Eden. The devil demanded that Christ would bow down and worship him after he had taken Jesus to an exceedingly high mountain. Satan always looks for opportunities to tempt us especially in the areas of our weaknesses. Just as Jesus pleased the Father when He was tempted, we must love the Lord and seek to please Him always.

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WEEK 11

GENEROSITY, THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Main Text: 2 Corinthians 8: 9

Memory Verse: *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends* - John 15:13

Introduction

In all matters of Christian character and virtue, the example of Christ is the standard to be followed. During His life on earth, Christ demonstrated generosity to various groups of people which culminated in the giving of His life to humankind. In general, generosity refers to the quality of selflessness, liberality in giving and the willingness to give your time, money, energy, talents or efforts for the benefit of others. This flows from a pure intention to seek the interest of others and not the desire to be seen and noted for acts of kindness. Our study will enable us identify the marks of generosity as demonstrated by Jesus.

Questions For Discussion

1. How do you understand generosity?
2. How does Christ's earthly ministry and death demonstrate generosity? Verse 9

3. What was Jesus' motive for all the sacrifices he made for humankind? Romans 5:8-11
4. Taking Christ as an example, what should be our motives for acts of generosity?
5. How would you apply lessons from today's study to your life?

Conclusion

To be generous means to be selfless, liberal in giving, kind and willing to meet the needs of others. Jesus gave up the glory that was rightfully His. He emptied Himself of His divine nature and privileges and took the form of man to enable Him fulfil the mission of saving humankind from eternal damnation. In Christ's example, we can identify selflessness, sacrifice, liberality and the willingness to meet a need. Further to this, His motive was not to seek glory for Himself but the salvation of humanity. As followers of Jesus, His generosity and motive ought to serve as an example for us. Thus, our motives for helping people must be sincere and pure and should spring up from a genuine love. Our acts of generosity must be devoid of selfish motives, public show of religiosity and the desire to project ourselves (Matt 6:2-3).

WEEK 12

CALLING THE FAMILY TOGETHER
(FAMILY DEVOTIONS)

Main Texts: Acts 10:24–33; Luke 11:1–2

Memory Verse: ... *Lord teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples* - Luke 11: 1b

Introduction

Devotion is loyalty to a person or enthusiasm for an activity. In the Christian life, devotions could be time set by a person or family where they seek the face of the Lord in prayer, reading of the Word and fellowship. It is one of the means by which Christians show their love and loyalty to God by spending time with Him on a daily consistent basis. Jesus was committed to having personal devotions with God and He sometimes did it with the disciples. One day after His prayer, the disciples asked that He taught them how to pray. From the account in Acts, Cornelius called together his family to hear the Word of the Lord from Peter. On that occasion, the family and friends who were gathered received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This shows the importance of family devotions.

Questions For Discussion

1. What is family devotions?

2. Discuss the benefits of family devotions? Luke 11:1; Acts 10:44
3. What did Cornelius do to receive Peter? Acts 10:24
4. What major activities go into a family devotions? Luke 11:1; Acts 10:34-38
5. How would you setup an effective family devotions?

Conclusion

Family devotions is a consistent time set by families, friends or dependants in a household for prayer, worship, fellowship and sharing God's word. The disciples of Jesus requested to be taught to pray when they observed Him praying. This means people can learn Christian disciplines like prayer, Bible study and preaching that enhance spirituality during family devotions. Though devotions could be held at any convenient time, early morning devotions before family members go out to engage in the activities of the day is the best. As seen in the example of Cornelius' household, devotions could involve an opportunity for people to respond to the message, confess Christ or even receive the Holy Spirit baptism. Effective family devotions should not be limited to routine methods of prayer and short exhortations but a real encounter with the Holy Spirit.

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WEEK 15

**PERSEVERING IN
OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH**

Main Text: Matthew 26:36-46

Memory Verse: *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!* - Philippians 2:8

Introduction

One of the examples Jesus Christ left us to follow as His disciples is in the area of perseverance in obedience to Him. As our perfect example, He persevered in obeying the will of God even to the point of death. Many people come to Christ in full obedience to Him. However, when they are faced with challenges that have to do with the faith, they either display partial obedience or become totally disobedience to Him. In this study, we will examine the perseverance of Jesus before His death on the cross.

Questions For Discussion

1. How many times did Jesus go to pray and what did He pray about? Verses 39, 42, 44
2. How did Jesus feel when He thought about going to the Cross? Verse 38

3. How did Jesus demonstrate obedience to the Father? Verse 39
4. Give examples of life issues that usually prevent Christians from making room for the will of God in their prayers.
5. In what practical ways can we live out the saying, "Not my will Lord, but your will be done"?

Conclusion

Jesus demonstrated absolute obedience even to the point of death. As God made flesh, He had the option as death approached to decide not to die. That is why He said "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will". Notwithstanding this feeling, Jesus still resorted to finding strength from the Father to do His will. Sometimes, as followers of Jesus, we also come to such nerve-racking and life-threatening moments. When we face sicknesses for instance, do we still wait on the Lord to heal us or we resort to 'native doctors' and false prophets? We trust that the Holy Spirit will grant us the grace to persevere in following Jesus' example of total obedience.

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WEEK 18

**INTERCEDING FOR
PEOPLE IN AUTHORITY**

Main Texts: 1 Tim 2:1-3; Titus 3:1

Memory Verse: *Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good* - Titus 3:1

Introduction

Political situations of every nation affect the lives of all citizens. In view of this, Apostle Paul specifically instructs that prayers be made for kings and all those in authority. In countries where there is political instability, Christians also experience challenges and the church suffers. Christians therefore, are expected to exercise their civic responsibilities, respect, obey and pray for political leadership.

Questions For Discussion

1. What did Paul instruct Timothy to do for kings and those in authority? 1 Timothy 2:1-2
2. Why did Paul say we should pray for people in authority? 1 Timothy 2: 3
3. Who are “those in authority” as stated in this passage? 1 Timothy 2:2

4. What do you think will happen if the church fails to pray about political issues?
5. What role can you play in the politics of the nation?

Conclusion

Paul urged Timothy to pray for all people including kings and those in political authority. This is because, it is only then that the nation will have peace. When there is peace in the nation, the Christians can also have peaceful and quiet lives to worship and serve God. If the church fails to pray for God's guidance and direction in political issues, Christians will also suffer if things do not go well.

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WEEK 20

JESUS CAME TO SERVE

Main Text: Mark 10:35-45

Memory Verse: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many* - Mark 10:45

Introduction

Sometimes, Jesus' disciples argued among themselves concerning which of them would occupy the highest position in the kingdom. Their desire for status actually caused James and John to secretly attempt to lobby the Lord Jesus to favour them. They even had the support of their mother to join in their scheme for greatness (Matt 20:20-21). These two brothers and Peter formed the inner core around Jesus. These three disciples were given the chance to witness some events the others did not see. Perhaps, this made John and James to feel more favoured and superior to their colleagues. Jesus dismissed their attitude and taught them what true greatness entailed. The Lord declares "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be a slave of all."

Questions For Discussion

1. What did James and John want Jesus to do for them? Verse 37
2. What was the reaction of the other disciples to their request? Verse 41
3. 'Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.' Discuss.
4. Jesus said He came to serve and not to be served. What does this mean? Verse 45
5. In what ways do we see the attitudes of James and John manifest in the Church?

Conclusion

James and John lobbied for favour and status from Jesus. The implications of their request were disturbing and Jesus had to help them appreciate it accordingly. The other disciples of Jesus were obviously unhappy with how the situation was going. Therefore, Jesus taught them that the greatest is the one who serves. Great people are those who consider positions as opportunities to serve. Jesus Christ demonstrated this much more with His death on the cross, the consummation of all service. Like Jesus, we must consider all our earthly endeavours as service to God and humankind.

WEEK 21

DISCUSS TODAY'S SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

DISCUSS TODAY'S SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

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WEEK 24

PREACHING REPENTANCE LIKE JESUS

Main Text: John 4:16-29

Memory Verse: *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance* - Luke 5:32

Introduction

A careful study of the evangelistic activities of Jesus Christ reveals that His main objective was to call sinners to repentance. We can tell from Jesus' ministry that His concern was to proclaim repentance to the lost (Matt 4:17). However, in contemporary times, some evangelistic activities do not aim primarily at bringing people to repentance but rather to fill our churches, write nice reports and making a name for ourselves. In the passage for our study, we observe how Jesus sets a perfect example by ministering repentance to the Samaritan woman.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the situation of the woman Jesus spoke with? Verses 16-18
2. How did the woman respond when her situation was revealed to her? Verses 19-20

3. How did Jesus reveal Himself as the Messiah to the woman? Verses 25-26
4. Describe the situation of the woman after she encountered Jesus Verses 28-29
5. Identify the marks of a genuine convert.

Conclusion

Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman gives us a perfect example that our evangelistic activities should touch on the sinful conditions of our hearers and bring them to repentance. The woman had already had five husbands and was involved in an illegitimate relationship. When Jesus revealed her condition to her, she marvelled and concluded that He was a prophet. But Jesus went further to prove to her that He was the Messiah. In the end, she left her jar and run into the city proclaiming her encounter with Him. The woman's swift response to the message and immediate action are tangible marks of a repentant person. Jesus did not disregard her sinful situation but exposed it and offered her the way of salvation. In the same way, we must engage people with the message of Christ, reveal their sin through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ.

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WEEK 28

SUBMISSION TO PEOPLE IN AUTHORITY

Main Text: Romans 13:1-7

Memory verse: *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God* - Romans 13:1

Introduction

Our study today focuses on how Christians are expected to submit to governing authorities, including political leaders. This is important to maintain peace and order and at the same time, to promote development. Submission to political leaders is also important because, the law deals with those who rebel against political leaders. We see from today's passage that political leaders are God's servants because all authorities are God-ordained.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who establishes governing authorities? Verse 1
2. What will happen to those who rebel against governing authorities? Verse 2

3. How will you describe political leaders in the light of Romans 13:4a?
4. What should be our attitude towards governing authorities?
5. What lessons have you learnt from today's study?

Conclusion

Since governing authorities are God-ordained, the Bible admonishes us to submit to them. Apostle Paul makes it clear that, rebellion against those in authority is rebellion against God and attracts judgement. Rulers are God's servants and their purpose is to do good to their subjects. The reason we are expected to submit to them is not only to avoid punishment but also to have a clear conscience before God (Rom 13:4, 5). Christians are therefore, expected to set the best examples by being humble and submissive to our own leaders.

HANDLING CHALLENGES IN THE FAMILY

Main Text: Luke 15:11-32

Memory Verse: *The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him* - Luke 15:28

Introduction

Challenges are part of the normal ups and downs of life. Some challenges are exciting: a father or husband gets a job promotion and moves the family to a new home. A mother or wife has a baby and suddenly there is a new sibling or son. Other challenges can be more difficult, for example, a family business has to fold up because of career change or any other factor.

In this study, we shall look at how we can handle such challenges in our families. Jesus told His disciples the parable of “the prodigal son.” It teaches the challenge a family went through when a family member wasted his portion of the family’s inheritance but was accepted back home.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was the request of the younger son to his father? Verse 12

2. What did the younger son do with his inheritance? Verse 13
3. How did the father respond when his younger son came home? Verses 20-23
4. How did the elder son react to the celebration in honour of his brother, and what was the father's response? Verse 28
5. What lessons have you learnt from today's discussions?

Conclusion

In this story we have learnt that the younger son requested for his share of the father's inheritance and spent it in extravagant living. However, after wasting all he had, he came back home and was accepted by the father who held a banquet in his honour. The elder son however, was offended as he felt discriminated against. The father consoled and helped him realize how important it was to have his brother back.

Families may from time to time have to deal with relational challenges but we would have to have the patience to accept even those who go wayward and show repentance.

DISCUSS TODAY'S SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

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WEEK 33

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

Main Text: John 6:1-13

Memory Verse: *The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor* - Proverbs 22:9

Introduction

Global statistics from the World Food Programme indicate that about 795 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead healthy active lives. The vast majority of these people live in Developing countries where about 12.9 percent of the population is undernourished. Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana inclusive) is the region with the highest prevalence. In Jesus' earthly ministry, He showed compassion and sometimes fed those who followed Him and were hungry.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why did the great crowd follow Jesus and His disciples? Verse 2
2. What was Jesus's response when He saw that great crowd coming to Him? Verses 5-6

3. Identify some responses of His disciples as Jesus tried to feed the hungry people? Verses 7-9
4. How did Jesus feed the hungry people? Verses 10-13
5. How can we as individuals, families and churches show compassion towards the hungry?

Conclusion

As Christians, we can emulate Christ's example by caring for the hungry. Feeding the poor is part of Christian service which we must demonstrate as individuals, families or churches. Jesus did this when He saw the crowd that was following Him because of the signs and wonders they had seen Him perform. Though the disciples did not have immediate response to feeding the people, Jesus used the little resources available to meet that great need. We may not be able to show such great help on a large scale like Jesus but in our own small way, we can contribute to reduce the alarming rate of world hunger by providing for that poor neighbour next door.

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WEEK 37

GODLY PARENTING

Main Text: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Memory Verse: *Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. (NKJV) - Proverbs 22:6*

Introduction

Parents are usually confronted with the challenge of how to raise their children in ways that please God. As society becomes more complex and confusing, the task of parenting also becomes complex. Thus, in order to understand what godly parenting is and become effective parents, there is the need for us to turn to God daily; godly parenting begins with Him. As God commanded human beings to be fruitful and increase in number, He has also assigned the responsibility of training offspring to parents. They are expected to train their children in the way they should go so that when they grow, they will not depart from it. As Christians, our parenting should be the model the world can emulate. Today's lesson seeks to help us be the best example in godly parenting to the world.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was God's command to the Israelites? Verses 4-5
2. How were the Israelites to keep the commands? Verse 6
3. What does God expect from parents? Verse 7
4. How can parents raise godly children in this contemporary time?
5. What are some of the challenges to godly parenting?

Conclusion

The Bible makes it clear that God created man in His own image. God is the first parent and He gave man the ability to reproduce children and take care of them just as He also takes care of us. God instructed the Israelites to teach their children His commands. He even told them to "talk about them when they sit at home and walk along the road". This means that, God expects parents to reproduce in their children His character. Within contemporary society, the internet as well as postmodern ideas makes parenting more difficult. Parents will need to be aware of these and help their children through the Word of God and prayer to overcome the deceptions that may come from bad influences. By so doing, our godly parenting can have a positive impact on the society or the world at large.

THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY

Main Text: Ephesians 6:1-3

Memory Verse: *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord* - Colossians 3:20

Introduction

Fathers and mothers have divine responsibilities to raise their children in the fear of the Lord and care for them. Children also have the responsibility to respect and obey their parents in the Lord. This is pleasing to the Lord. Children who want God to be pleased with them have no other choice but to submit to and obey their parents in the Lord. Today's study focuses on the role of children in the Christian family and how their obedience could be good examples to other children.

Questions For Discussion

1. What is the first command with a promise? Verse 2
2. What benefits do children derive when they obey and honour their parents? Verse 3
3. Mention some practical things children can do to demonstrate their obedience and respect for parents.

4. How can children who are Christians be good examples to others?

Conclusion

Parents have already gone through the stages of life which children are now struggling to walk through. The successes and failures of parents are indispensable experiences for training their children in the Lord. In view of this, children are expected to take instructions from their parents about life and godliness. They are also expected to take part in household chores, run errands and seek direction from their parents. Further, they are not to compare themselves to others or wrongly copy bad behaviours from the television and the internet. Since they are young, sometimes what appeals to them may not be right in the sight of the Lord. The Bible makes it clear that when children obey their parents, it will go well with them and they will also enjoy long life.

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DISCUSS TODAY'S SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

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WEEK 42

THE ROLE OF FATHERS IN THE FAMILY

Main Text: 1 Corinthians 4:14-21

Memory Verse: *For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him* - Genesis 18:19

Introduction

In order to be good fathers to children, fathers need to be intentional about training their children. They should also understand that they were purposely chosen by God to direct their household especially their children to follow after God. So the father is the priest, the coach, the director and the teacher of the house. Whatever he does becomes an example for the household to learn. The future of any generation therefore, is greatly influenced by the behaviour and character of fathers. In today's lesson, we will use Paul as a model to study the role of fathers in parenting.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did Paul become the spiritual father of the church in Corinth? Verse 15

2. Mention three things Paul did to the church in Corinth as a spiritual father? Verses 16-17
3. Why was it important for Paul to still go to Corinth? Verse 19
4. Why do you think Paul had the confidence to tell the church to imitate him?
5. What lessons have you learnt from Paul as model of fatherhood?

Conclusion

Through the gospel of Christ Jesus, Paul became the spiritual father of the church in Corinth. In writing to them, Paul does not want to shame them because fathers are not to provoke their children (Ephes 6:4). He, however, warned them against arrogance, reminded them of his way of life and urged them to imitate him. Even though he wrote to them and also sent Timothy to them, that was not enough for him. He also planned to visit them in person as a father. Fathers are expected to be intentionally involved in the raising of their children in ways pleasing to the Lord.

WEEK 43

THE ROLE OF MOTHERS IN THE FAMILY

Main Text: 1 Samuel 1:19-27

Memory Verse: *I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also* - 2 Timothy 1:5

Introduction

There is an African proverb that says “it takes a village to raise a child.” While a child is influenced and shaped by the entire society, the parents are those expected to play a more pivotal role. Parenting involves promoting a child’s well-being by supporting his or her spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional and social development among others. This study focuses on the significant role mothers play in raising children. They form a critical component of the parenting process and usually the first point of call for children.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why did Hannah name her son Samuel? Verse 20
2. What was Hannah’s reason for not joining the family to Shiloh? Verses 21-22

3. How did Hannah care for the boy Samuel? Verses 23-24
4. In what ways did Hannah care for Samuel when he was with Eli? 1 Samuel 2:19
5. How can mothers contribute to the parenting of their children?

Conclusion

Our study today reveals how Hannah dedicated herself to ensuring that Samuel was well catered for. She did everything she could. Even when the boy Samuel was with Eli, she prepared robes for him and showed him a lot of affection. Children require security, emotional support, as well as education and discipline among others from mothers. We have also learnt that, Hannah influenced the spiritual growth of her son. There is the need for mothers to constantly follow up on their children no matter where they are. This can be done through telephone calls, attending Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, visiting them at school and finding out about them through their teachers, friends and spiritual leaders.

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WEEK 46

**LEARNING OBEDIENCE
THROUGH SUFFERING**

Main Text: John 7:1-10

Memory Verse: Hebrews 5:8 *Although He was a son, he learnt obedience from what He suffered.*

Introduction

Many Christians despise suffering; they see suffering as a bad thing. From the perspective of the Christian life, "Suffering" can be seen as "any situation or circumstance which has the tendency to cause us to disobey the voice of the Lord". Suffering presents itself as persecution for the faith, insults, slander, peer pressure, delays in our expectations and temptations of many kinds. The Bible, however, presents suffering as an opportunity for learning, growth and maturity in the Christian life. One of such opportunities for learning is in the area of obedience. In this study, we will examine and draw implications from one case in which Jesus, as God made flesh, grabbed the opportunity to learn and grow in obedience.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Jesus, why did the world hate Him?
Verse 7

2. Why were Jesus' brothers pressurizing Him to go to the festival? Verses 3-5
3. What did Jesus mean by "The right time for me has not yet come"? Verse 8
4. Share some examples where friends, families or colleagues pressurized you to do something against God's will.
5. In what ways can we follow the example of Jesus to ensure that we obey God's will and timing in various aspects of our lives?

Conclusion

The world hated Jesus because He spoke against their evil deeds. Every moment of suffering presents the Christian with two options- either to learn and grow in our obedience to the will of the Lord or to resort to other ungodly alternative responses. Though fully God, Jesus in His humanity learned and grew in obedience to the Father through the various moments of suffering that came His way. Suffering is God-ordained way to nurture virtue such as obedience in our lives as Christians. Keep in mind that sufferings are great opportunities to learn and mature in obedience to the voice of the Lord.

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WEEK 48

DISTRICT/LOCAL/CELL INPUT

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WEEK 50

**JESUS CHRIST,
THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD**

Main Text: Luke 19:1-10

Memory Verse: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.* - Acts 4:12

Introduction

Salvation means to be delivered from the powers of satan, sin and its consequences. Just as through Adam, sin and death entered the world, so also through Christ, eternal life has been made available to all who believe in Him. Fully aware of this truth, Peter told the rulers and religious leaders of Israel that “There is no other name under heaven given to humankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus, the tax collector, provides a perfect example of His passion for the lost. As the Saviour of the world, the Lord used every opportunity to seek and save them.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was Zacchaeus’ challenge in attempting to see Jesus? Verse 3

2. How did he overcome this challenge? Verse 4
3. What was Jesus' responds to Zacchaeus' effort to see Him? Verses 5, 9
4. Discuss the statement, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" Verse 10
5. Identify some challenges people face in coming to faith in Christ. How will you help them to overcome the challenges?

Conclusion

We read in the passage that Zacchaeus was a short man so he could not see Jesus because of the crowd. He therefore ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore-fig tree in order to see Jesus. Reaching the spot, Jesus stopped and requested to be with Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Since tax collectors were considered to be sinners, the crowd did not understand why Jesus could go to the house of a sinner. In response to this, Jesus revealed this important truth about Himself, "for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost". This is His core mandate as the Saviour of the world.

DISCUSS TODAY'S SERMON/BIBLE STUDY

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WEEK 52

CHRISTMAS CONVENTION

EXTRA SCRIPTS AVAILABLE FOR USE	
The Selflessness Of Jesus	183
Selfless Service	185
How To Handle Political Issues	187
The Poor In Spirit	189
Blessed Are Those Who Mourn	191
Comfort From The Lord	193
The Compassionate Jesus	195
Overcoming Cultural Barriers With Compassion	197

THE SELFLESSNESS OF JESUS

Main Text: John: 4:6-8, 27-34

Memory Verse: “My food”, said Jesus, *“is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work”* - John 4:34

Introduction

Selflessness is one of the character traits of Jesus Christ. It is defined as the condition of putting others before oneself and making others feel important and loved at one's own expense. The scripture is full of stories depicting the selflessness of Jesus, which we can emulate as we aspire to follow His example in our generation. The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in the passage for our study will help us learn useful lessons on selflessness.

Questions For Discussion

1. What does it mean to be selfless?
2. Why did Jesus ask for water? Verse 6
3. What was Jesus' answer to the disciples when He was called to eat? Verse 34
4. How did Jesus demonstrate selflessness in the passage? Verses 6,31,34
5. Share a personal testimony where you acted selflessly towards a neighbour.

Conclusion

We live in a generation where people have become lovers of themselves rather than God (2 Tim 3:4). Many of us work ourselves to death, so we can make a name for ourselves, acquire bigger house or luxurious vehicles; but we hardly sacrifice for others.

Our lesson for today teaches that, even though Jesus was thirsty, tired and hungry, His knowledge of the Samaritan woman's need overwhelmed Him so much that, He sacrificed His comfort to attend to her. Though hungry, Jesus saw meeting the needs of the woman more satisfying than the food the disciples had brought. Like Jesus, we should be willing to sacrifice our comfort to meet the pressing needs of others.

SELFLESS SERVICE

Main Text: John: 13:4-8, 12-17

Memory Verse: *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you* - John: 13:15

Introduction

In today's world, people are mostly treated based on their social status. In other words, people are treated according to how society perceives them. This mind-set has made some high class people to be self-centred and insensitive to others. In today's passage, we see Jesus set a very good example of how people of high status should serve selflessly. Jesus, though was God, humbled Himself even to the point of washing the feet of His disciples. Let us follow Jesus' example.

Questions For Discussion

1. How did the disciples call Jesus? Verse 13
2. Why did Jesus wash their feet? Verse 15
3. How did Peter respond when Jesus wanted to wash his feet? Verse 8
4. Why do you think it is very difficult for most prominent people to live selflessly?
5. What have you learnt personally from the study?

Conclusion

The disciples called Jesus Lord and Master; nevertheless, He taught them an important lesson on selfless service. This He did by washing their feet. It was aimed at demonstrating that irrespective of the positions we find ourselves here on earth, we are to do likewise. Peter was obviously unhappy and tried to refuse Jesus' request to wash his feet. This is because the washing of feet was done by servants. Even though Jesus was Lord and Teacher, His selfless act of service did not change that status, rather, it became a perfect model for all.

HOW TO HANDLING POLITICAL ISSUES

Main Text: Luke 20:19-26

Memory Verse: *Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God (NLT) - Luke 20:25b*

Introduction

During the time of Jesus, Israel was governed by the Romans. History tells us that Romans normally imposed heavy taxes on their subjects. The teachers of the law and the chief priests in their bid to get Jesus arrested tried to trap Him with a delicate political issue. If they could get Jesus take some position against the people of Israel, then His own people would abandon Him. On the other hand, if His answer was against Rome, then He could be arrested for treason. Our study focuses on the wisdom of Christ in handling the question of paying taxes.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who were the people who tried to trap Jesus?
Verse 19
2. What was their intention for tempting to Him?
Verses 19-20
3. What question did they ask? Verse 22
4. How did Jesus respond to their question? Verses 24-25

5. In what ways are we confronted with similar political questions and how can Jesus' example guide us?

Conclusion

The intention of the religious leaders was to get Jesus arrested. The image stamped on the coin was Caesar's image and the image stamped on man is God's image. Therefore, man owes to Caesar [Government] whatever carries Caesar's image and to God whatever carries God's image. This was the simple truth the religious leaders failed to realize and in the end, they were silenced. Rather than involving oneself in political arguments and fights, it is necessary that we learn to speak with the wisdom of God. Today's reading makes it clear that political authority is God-ordained so believers are mandated to obey civil authority. In the same vein, we are also required to give to God all reverence and worship.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Main Text: Luke 18:9-13

Memory Verse: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* - Matthew 5:3

Introduction

This first beatitude touches the core of what the inner qualities of a true disciple of Jesus Christ should be – poor in spirit. To be ‘poor in spirit’ does not mean lacking means of subsistence, or to be without food, clothing, or shelter. Jesus was teaching spiritual poverty when He gave the parable in our main reading. Being poor in spirit therefore, is the willingness to throw away our own self-sufficiency and open our hands to receive from Christ. Like the tax collector who pleaded for mercy and desired God’s forgiveness and kindness, those who are spiritually poor have a sense of emptiness and look up to God to be filled.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why did Jesus tell the parable according to the passage? Verse 9
2. What was the prayer of the Pharisee? Verses 11, 13
3. How did the tax collector pray? Verse 13

4. Which of the two did God listen to, and why?
5. How can we demonstrate that we are poor in spirit?

Conclusion

According to the passage, Jesus told a parable of the prayer of a Pharisee and Tax Collector to teach about self-righteousness and despising others. The Pharisee saw himself to be righteous in his own eyes and sung praises for himself in prayer before God. He counted himself not to be a cheat, unjust or adulterous, thus despising the Tax Collector who prayed and pleaded for mercy. Consequently, the Lord heard the prayer of the Tax Collector because he saw his need of God. The person who is not “poor in spirit” is “full of self.” Jesus expects us to follow His example of humility and fully depend on God. We need to respect others and treat them as important as we treat ourselves, knowing that all we have and can do is by the grace of God.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

Main Text: Matthew 5:4

Memory Verse: *This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit. My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed* - Lamentations 1:16

Introduction

The word 'mourn' has been defined as 'feeling or expressing sorrow or grief over misfortune, loss or anything regretted.' It also includes all experiences where we may feel crushed, broken or sorrowful. People mourn for various reasons. In this passage the Lord was teaching about a certain kind of mourner; the person recognizes the sinful state of his heart, his unworthiness before God, and being desperately repentant for his sins (Psalm 51:1-4).

Again, the Lord was speaking about the person who is sad and distressed by the terrible suffering of others. He is sorrowful over the sinful condition of mankind, the tragedies and troubles that pervade the world because of sin (Lam 1:16). There are also those who like Job, go through adversity because the Lord allows it (Job 16:20). All these categories of mourners are promised comfort from the Lord.

Questions For Discussion

1. What does “mourn” in this verse refer to? Why are mourners blessed? Verse 4
2. Why was David mourning in Psalm 51:1-4?
3. What caused Jeremiah to weep? Lamentations 1:16
4. Job said, “My eyes pour out tears to God.” Why? Job 16:20
5. According to Matthew 5:4 what kind of mourning is recommended by the Lord?

Conclusion

In today’s study, we encounter David deeply sorry for his own sins over which he mourns. Jeremiah laments over the desolate state of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Job also weeps over his tragedies and loss, which he could not understand and over which he had no control. The Lord assures consolation for all such people. Let us turn to Him in times of trouble because He cares.

COMFORT FROM THE LORD

Main Text: Matthew 5:4

Memory Verse: *Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.* - 2 Corinthians 1:4

Introduction

People sometimes get distressed and mourn over trivial things. In God's scheme of things, certain concerns that cause us sorrow do not really matter. A man may become sad and even refuse to eat because his favourite football team lost a match, but does not care 'a hoot' about his corrupt ways at the office. A Christian woman was so sorrowful at the loss of her preferred candidate in an election that she fainted. What words of comfort will the Holy Spirit minister to these kinds of mourners? The Lord has promised blessedness and comfort for those who are distressed over the things that touch the heart of God.

Questions For Discussion

1. Name some trivial issues that people sometimes mourn over.
2. As believers, mention some matters that we should grieve over.

3. Why does God comfort us in our troubles?
2 Corinthians 1:4.
4. To what kind of mourners does the Lord promise comfort?Matthew 5:4
5. In your personal experience, what are some things that have caused you sorrow?

Conclusion

In our daily lives, we encounter issues that make us sad. If we view the world the way God sees it, our sorrow at happenings around us will reflect the heart of God and cause us to respond appropriately. On the other hand, if our perception of the world is all about the here and now, we will be sad and mourn over the wrong things. God assures us of His comfort (Isa 51:12a). This comfort from God makes us better placed to comfort others also. What we go through makes us more sensitive to God, ourselves and others. It enriches our ministry in the body of Christ especially in the area of counselling. It is believed that the best counsellors are those who have experienced the deepest hurts.

THE COMPASSIONATE JESUS

Main Text: Matthew 9:35-38

Memory Verse: *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd (NKJV)- Matthew 9:36*

Introduction

To be compassionate means to be moved inwardly; to yearn with tender mercy, affection, pity and empathy. All around, it is obvious that we live in a heartless and cruel world. The notion that “each one for himself, God for us all” has become a sad reality in our societies to the extent that many people do not care about what happens to others. The situation is disturbing because over the years, many people have suffered unduly as they attempted to offer help and assist others. Should we continue to be compassionate? Jesus provides a perfect model which we can emulate as we study the passage.

Questions For Discussion

1. What was Jesus doing as He travelled through the towns and villages? Verse 35
2. Describe how He felt when He saw the crowd. Verse 36

3. Identify the state of the crowd when Jesus saw them. Verse 36
4. What request did the Lord Jesus put before His disciples? Verses 37-38
5. How can we emulate Jesus' example of compassion?

Conclusion

Jesus travelled through the towns and villages proclaiming the Good News and healing every disease. His act was prompted by His compassion towards the crowd whom He saw to be harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. He therefore, asked His disciples to pray that God will send more workers into the harvest. These should be people who are compassionate and willing to extend a helping hand to the vulnerable. Compassion is sharing the pain of others and desiring to help them in their trouble. We can become compassionate with the help of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23).

OVERCOMING RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BARRIERS WITH COMPASSION

Main Text: Luke 8:43-45

Memory Verse: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus - Galatians 3:28*

Introduction

In the Gospel narratives, Jesus overlooked the existing Jewish culture and religion to reach out to the Samaritans. One aspect of the Jewish religious practice was to consider any woman with the discharge of blood as unclean. We see in this passage that the woman had been bleeding for twelve years. By Jewish law, she was considered unclean (Lev 15:25-27). Without compassion she was to be totally cut off from society and religious gatherings. However, out of compassion, Jesus overlooked this practice and healed the woman.

Questions For Discussion

1. Who touched the garment of Jesus and what was the outcome? Verse 44
2. In your opinion, why do you think the woman was reluctant to own up?
3. How did Jesus respond to the woman's behaviour? Luke 8:48

4. Share an experience of how you overlooked a cultural or religious barrier to do what is right in God's sight.

Conclusion

Cultural and religious barriers should not hinder us from showing compassion and kindness to people. We should be prepared to forgo practices that do not glorify God. Though we could face opposition, there is the need to follow the example of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. The woman was trembling because, she was familiar with the culture of the day, which considered her unclean. Perhaps, she was also not sure how Jesus would react. Jesus' example portrays two significant points: First, it led to the complete healing of the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. Second that His ministry is not limited by cultural and religious barriers. We must be in the position to do likewise when the need arises.

READ THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR GUIDE

With this Bible Reading guide, you can go through the Bible verse by verse and Book by Book in one year. You also may start this plan any time and progress at your pace too.

Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	Genesis 1-3	Genesis 4-7	Genesis 8-11	Genesis 12-16	Genesis 17-19	Genesis 20-23	Genesis 24-25
2	Genesis 26-28	Genesis 29-30	Genesis 31-33	Genesis 34-36	Genesis 37-39	Genesis 40-42	Genesis 43-45
3	Genesis 46-47	Genesis 48-50	Exodus 1-4	Exodus 5-7	Exodus 8-10	Exodus 11-13	Exodus 14-16
4	Exodus 17-20	Exodus 21-23	Exodus 24-27	Exodus 28-30	Exodus 31-34	Exodus 35-37	Exodus 38-40
5	Leviticus 1-4	Leviticus 5-7	Leviticus 8-11	Leviticus 12-14	Leviticus 15-17	Leviticus 18-20	Leviticus 21-23
6	Leviticus 24-25	Leviticus 26-27	Numbers 1-2	Numbers 3-4	Numbers 5-6	Numbers 7-8	Numbers 9-11
7	Numbers 12-14	Numbers 15-17	Numbers 18-20	Numbers 21-23	Numbers 24-26	Numbers 27-30	Numbers 31-33
8	Numbers 34-36	Deuteronomy 1-2	Deuteronomy 3-4	Deuteronomy 5-7	Deuteronomy 8-11	Deuteronomy 12-15	Deuteronomy 16-19
9	Deuteronomy 20-23	Deuteronomy 24-27	Deuteronomy 28-29	Deuteronomy 30-31	Deuteronomy 32-34	Joshua 1-4	Joshua 5-7
10	Joshua 8-10	Joshua 11-14	Joshua 15-18	Joshua 19-21	Joshua 22-24	Judges 1-3	Judges 4-5
11	Judges 6-8	Judges 9-11	Judges 12-15	Judges 16-18	Judges 19-21	Ruth 1-4	1 Samuel 1-3
12	1 Samuel 4-7	1 Samuel 8-10	1 Samuel 11-13	1 Samuel 14-15	1 Samuel 16-17	1 Samuel 18-20	1 Samuel 21-24
13	1 Samuel 25-27	1 Samuel 28-31	2 Samuel 1-3	2 Samuel 4-7	2 Samuel 8-11	2 Samuel 12-13	2 Samuel 14-15
14	2 Samuel 16-18	2 Samuel 19-20	2 Samuel 21-22	2 Samuel 23-24	1 Kings 1-2	1 Kings 3-5	1 Kings 6-7
15	1 Kings 8-9	1 Kings 10-12	1 Kings 13-15	1 Kings 16-18	1 Kings 19-20	1 Kings 21-22	2 Kings 1-3
16	2 Kings 4-5	2 Kings 6-8	2 Kings 9-11	2 Kings 12-14	2 Kings 15-17	2 Kings 18-20	2 Kings 21-23
17	2 Kings 24-25	1 Chronicles 1-2	1 Chronicles 3-5	1 Chronicles 6-7	1 Chronicles 8-10	1 Chronicles 11-13	1 Chronicles 14-16
18	1 Chronicles 17-20	1 Chronicles 21-23	1 Chronicles 24-26	1 Chronicles 27-29	2 Chronicles 1-4	2 Chronicles 5-7	2 Chronicles 8-11

19	2 Chronicles 12-16	2 Chronicles 17-19	2 Chronicles 20-22	2 Chronicles 23-25	2 Chronicles 26-29	2 Chronicles 30-32	2 Chronicles 33-34
20	2 Chronicles 35-36	Ezra 1-4	Ezra 5-7	Ezra 8-10	Nehemiah 1-4	Nehemiah 5-7	Nehemiah 8-10
21	Nehemiah 11-13	Esther 1-4	Esther 5-10	Job 1-4	Job 5-8	Job 9-12	Job 13-17
22	Job 18-21	Job 22-26	Job 27-30	Job 31-34	Job 35-38	Job 39-42	Psalms 1-7
23	Psalms 8-14	Psalms 15-18	Psalms 19-24	Psalms 25-30	Psalms 31-34	Psalms 35-37	Psalms 38-42
24	Psalms 43-48	Psalms 49-54	Psalms 55-60	Psalms 61-67	Psalms 68-71	Psalms 72-75	Psalms 76-78
25	Psalms 79-84	Psalms 85-89	Psalms 90-95	Psalms 96-102	Psalms 103-105	Psalms 106-108	Psalms 109-115
26	Psalms 116-118	Psalms 119	Psalms 120-131	Psalms 132-138	Psalms 139-144	Psalms 145-150	Proverbs 1-3
27	Proverbs 4-7	Proverbs 8-10	Proverbs 11-13	Proverbs 14-16	Proverbs 17-19	Proverbs 20-22	Proverbs 23-25
28	Proverbs 26-28	Proverbs 29-31	Ecclesiastes 1-4	Ecclesiastes 5-8	Ecclesiastes 9-12	Song of Solomon 1-4	Song of Solomon 5-8
29	Isaiah 1-3	Isaiah 4-6	Isaiah 7-9	Isaiah 10-13	Isaiah 14-16	Isaiah 17-21	Isaiah 22-25
30	Isaiah 26-28	Isaiah 29-31	Isaiah 32-34	Isaiah 35-37	Isaiah 38-40	Isaiah 41-42	Isaiah 43-44
31	Isaiah 45-47	Isaiah 48-50	Isaiah 51-53	Isaiah 54-57	Isaiah 58-60	Isaiah 61-64	Isaiah 65-66
32	Jeremiah 1-3	Jeremiah 4-5	Jeremiah 6-8	Jeremiah 9-11	Jeremiah 12-14	Jeremiah 15-17	Jeremiah 18-21
33	Jeremiah 22-23	Jeremiah 24-26	Jeremiah 27-29	Jeremiah 30-31	Jeremiah 32-34	Jeremiah 35-37	Jeremiah 38-41
34	Jeremiah 42-45	Jeremiah 46-48	Jeremiah 49	Jeremiah 50	Jeremiah 51-52	Lamentations 1-2	Lamentations 3-5
35	Ezekiel 1-4	Ezekiel 5-9	Ezekiel 10-13	Ezekiel 14-16	Ezekiel 17-19	Ezekiel 20-21	Ezekiel 22-23

36	Ezekiel 24-26	Ezekiel 27-28	Ezekiel 29-31	Ezekiel 32-33	Ezekiel 34-36	Ezekiel 37-39	Ezekiel 40-42
37	Ezekiel 43-45	Ezekiel 46-48	Daniel 1-2	Daniel 3-4	Daniel 5-6	Daniel 7-9	Daniel 10-12
38	Hosea 1-4	Hosea 5-9	Hosea 10-14	Joel 1-3	Amos 1-3	Amos 4-6	Amos 7-9
39	Obadiah & Jonah	Micah 1-4	Micah 5-7	Nahum 1-3	Habakkuk 1-3	Zephaniah 1-3	Haggai 1-2
40	Zechariah 1-6	Zechariah 7-10	Zechariah 11-14	Malachi 1-4	Matthew 1-4	Matthew 5-7	Matthew 8-9
41	Matthew 10-12	Matthew 13-14	Matthew 15-17	Matthew 18-20	Matthew 21-22	Matthew 23-24	Matthew 25-26
42	Matthew 27-28	Mark 1-3	Mark 4-6	Mark 7-9	Mark 10-13	Mark 14-16	Luke 1
43	Luke 2-3	Luke 4-5	Luke 6-7	Luke 8-9	Luke 10-11	Luke 12-13	Luke 14-16
44	Luke 17-18	Luke 19-20	Luke 21-22	Luke 23-24	John 1-3	John 4-5	John 6-7
45	John 8-9	John 10-11	John 12-13	John 14-15	John 16-17	John 18-19	John 20-21
46	Acts 1-2	Acts 3-4	Acts 5-6	Acts 7-8	Acts 9-12	Acts 13-16	Acts 17-19
47	Acts 20-23	Acts 24-28	Romans 1-3	Romans 4-7	Romans 8-10	Romans 11-13	Romans 14-16
48	1 Corinthians 1-4	1 Corinthians 5-9	1 Cor. 10-13	1 Cor. 14-16	2 Cor. 1-4	2 Cor. 5-7	2 Cor. 8-10
49	2 Cor. 11-13	Galatians 1-3	Galatians 4-6	Ephesians 1-3	Ephesians 4-6	Philippians 1-4	Colossians 1-4
50	1 Thess. 1-3	1 Thess. 4-5	2 Thess. 1-3	1 Timothy 1-6	2 Timothy 1-4	Titus & Philemon	Hebrews 1-4
51	Hebrews 5-7	Hebrews 8-10	Hebrews 11-13	James 1-5	1 Peter 1-5	2 Peter 1-3	1 John 1-5
52	2 John, 3 John & Jude	Revelation 1-3	Revelation 4-7	Revelation 8-12	Revelation 13-16	Revelation 17-19	Revelation 20-22

ANY QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR OTHER INFORMATION?

ALL GENERAL questions, suggestions or information to be forwarded to any of the following persons;

APS. SAMUEL GAKPETOR (0244093690)

PS. FRANKLIN AGBOVI-HUSHIE (0244483084)

You can also send your suggestions to the emails below;

copdiscipleship@gmail.com AND samgakpetor@gmail.com

The following persons can be contacted for editorial inputs and queries for any of the languages below:

S/N	LANGUAGE	NAME	CONTACT	EMAIL
1	Akuapem Twi	Ps Henry Adu Obuobi	02444968945	aduobuobihenry@yahoo.com
2	Asante Twi	Ps William Boachie-Ansah	0244137880	boachieansah@gmail.com
3	Dangme	Eld Owula Tsatsu	0207778401	tsatsufot@yahoo.com
4	Ewe	Eld C. K. Badzi	0243260892	bcaiaphas@yahoo.com
5	Fante	Mrs Sylvia Acquah-Sampson	0247831637	afuaakaebi@gmail.com
6	Ga	Ps Henry S. Ako-Nai	02444889792	shakonai@yahoo.com
7	Konkomba (<i>Likpakpaaln</i>)	Ps James Magyam	0242636481	jamesmagyam@yahoo.com
8	Nzema	Ps Stephen Ewusie-Ocran	0245159880	skeo6454@gmail.com
9	French	Eld Jonas Kabore	0543606667	kaborejonas@yahoo.fr